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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE INDIVIDUALISM OF EMERSON AND THOREAU

Submitted by

Doris Holmes

(A.B., Boston University, 1927)

In partial fulfilment of requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

1929

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THE INDIVIDUALISM OF EMERSON AND THOREAU

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Outline

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- B. Early Lives and Training of Emerson and Thoreau
- C. The Influence of Rousseauism
- D. The Religious Influences
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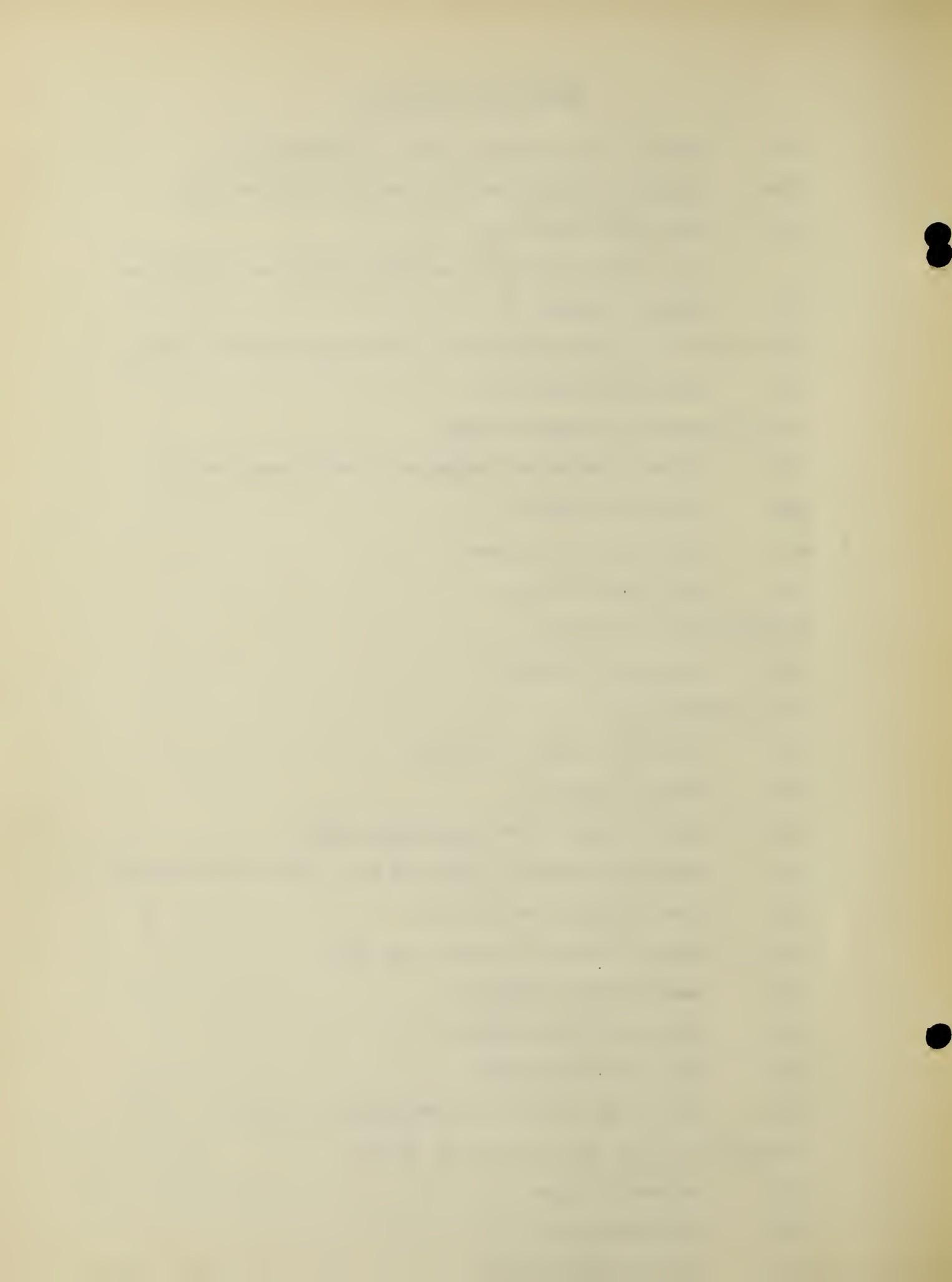
3. Conclusion and Inference about Individualism

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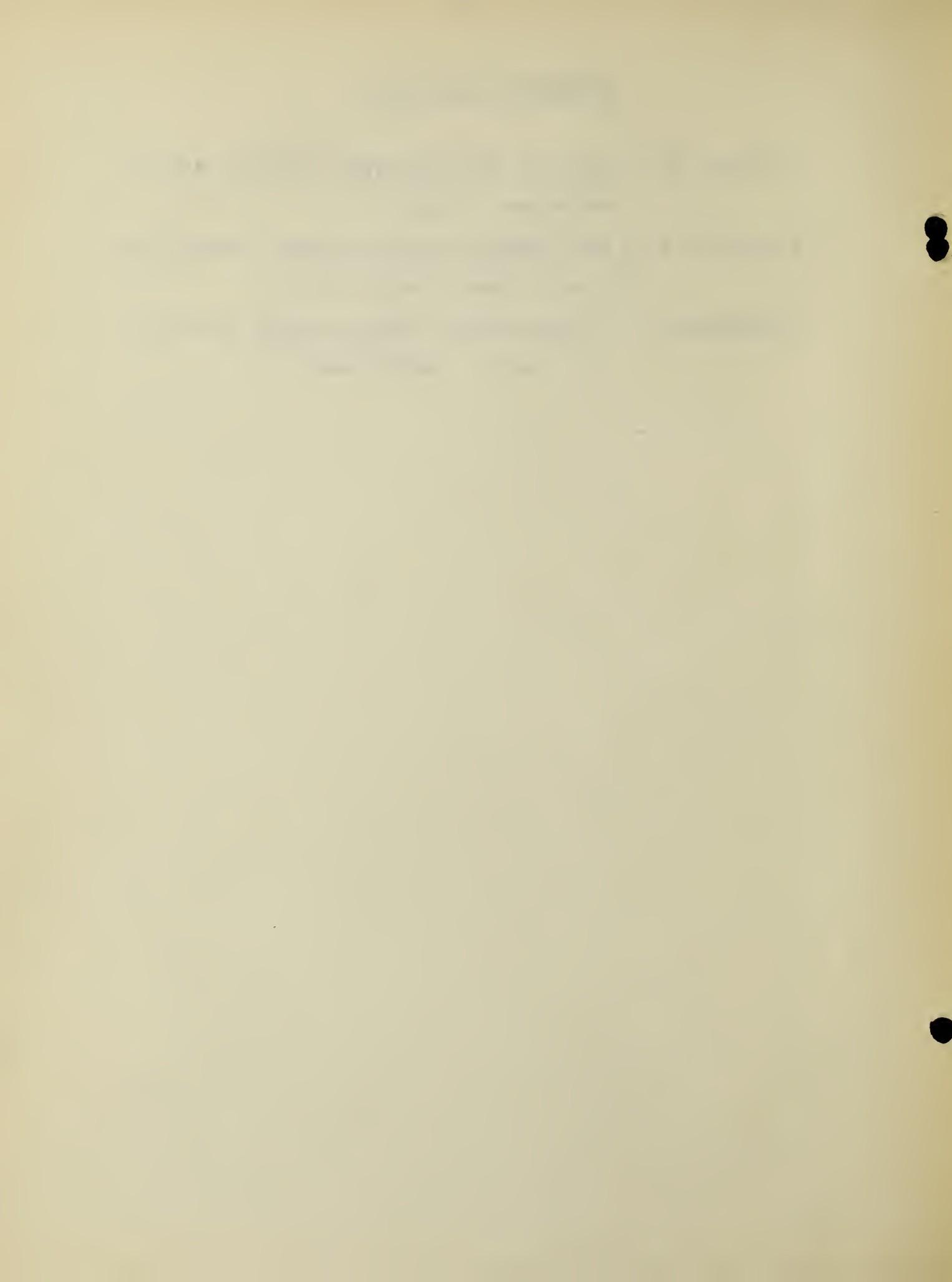
Chronological Table No. 1

- 1781 Surrender of Cornwallis; close of the Revolution
- 1793 Invention of the Cotton Gin fixes slavery in the South
- 1803 Ralph Waldo Emerson born
- The Louisiana Purchase - beginning of territorial expansion
- 1807 Fulton's Steamboat
- 1812-1815 War with England resulting in American independence on sea
- 1817 Henry David Thoreau born
- 1817-1821 Emerson at Harvard College
- 1820 Missouri Compromise - beginning of anti-slavery feeling
- 1823 The Monroe Doctrine
- 1825 Opening of the Erie Canal
- 1830 First Steam Railroads
- 1833-1837 Thoreau at Harvard
- 1844 Invention of Telegraph
- 1846-1848 Mexican War
- 1848 Discovery of Gold in California
- 1850 Fugitive Slave Act
- 1850 Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin
- 1857 Dred Scott Decision ("A slave is not a person, but property.")
- 1857 Steam Printing Press Invented
- 1859 Trial and Hanging of Captain John Brown
- 1860 Lincoln elected President
- 1861 Beginning of the Civil War
- 1862 Thoreau dies at Concord
- 1865 Close of the Civil War and Emancipation of Slaves
- 1865-1888 Period of Reconstruction and Reunion
- 1867 Purchase of Alaska
- 1876 Centennial Exposition
- 1882 Emerson dies at Concord



Chronological Table No. 1

1. Andrews, E. B., History of the United States, Chapter 8, Volume 1,
and Chapter 7, Volume 3.
2. Channing, E., A Short History of the United States, Sections 9, 10,
11, and 12. Table of dates, 16 and 17.
3. Montgomery, D. H., Leading Facts of American History, Chapters 6,
7, 8 and 9. Leading dates, 14.



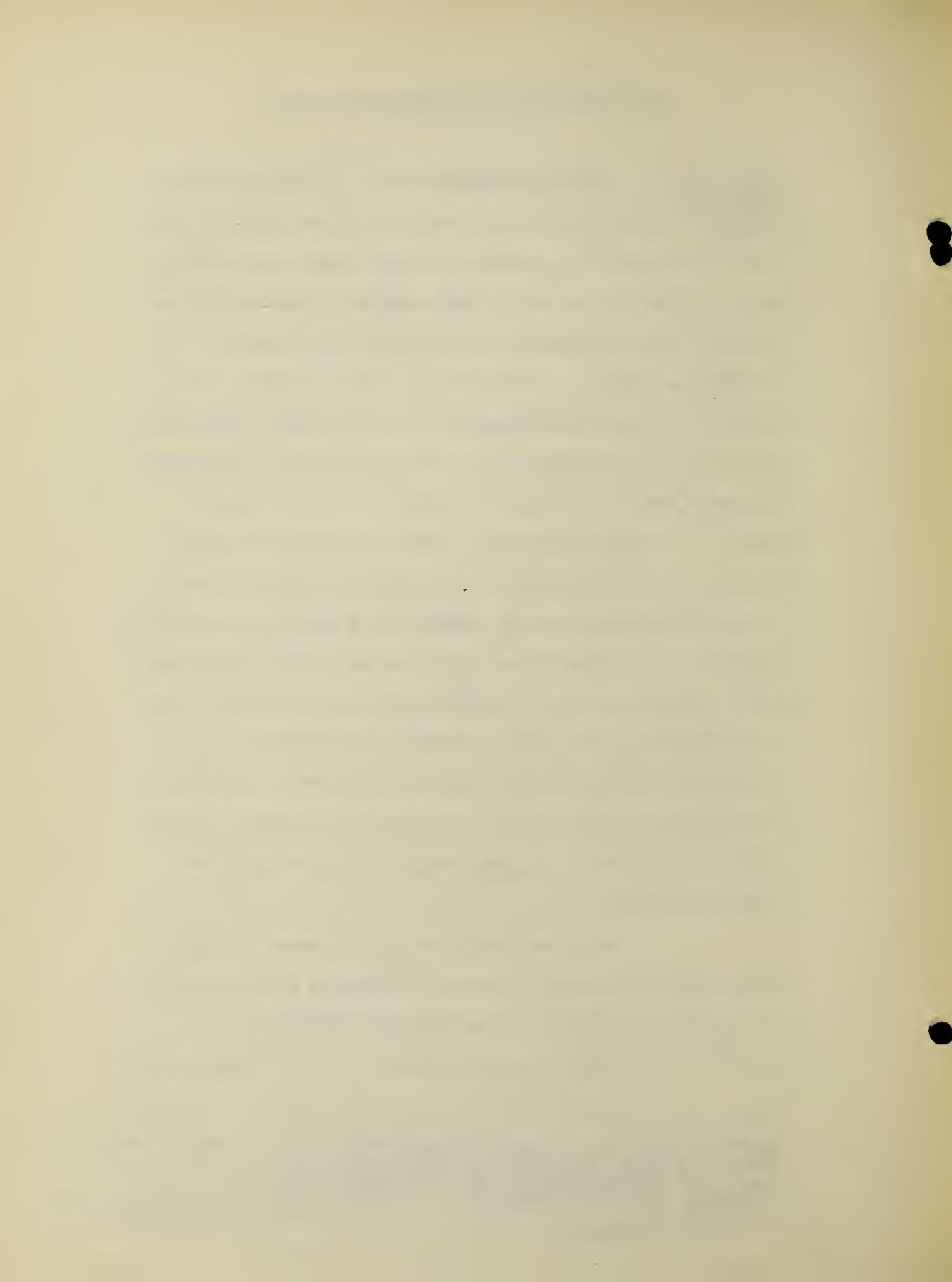
THE INDIVIDUALISM OF EMERSON AND THOREAU

I

America in the Nineteenth Century After the Revolution, even more warmly after the War of 1812, and throughout the first decades of the century, America felt the glow of national consciousness in an energy of independence which found assertion in the bustling importance of cotton mills and iron factories, and in the exhilarating invention of steamboats and steam railways. New roadways and canals, new newspapers and mail routes increased the means of internal communication. Provincialism was increasingly becoming a matter of tradition. Calvinism was on the wane although it lingered in one last protest of existence through revival movements and zealous establishments of Sunday Schools.¹ Puritan idealism incompletely expressed by what Mumford calls "the bloodless Unitarianism of the early nineteenth century which was a sort of humanism without courage",² was soon to pass through Transcendentalism and other forms of Individualist sentiment into a final stand against slavery and into the Civil War. Education was beginning to waken from its long theological drowse. High schools were founded. Colleges began to teach sciences and European literature.

Immigrants came in hordes on the waves of the European Romantic Movement, the potato famine of 1845 in Ireland, hard times in Germany, racial and religious persecution in Russia.³ They stayed to become engrossed in the first enthusiasm

Andrews, History of the United States (chap. 8, vol. 2, chap. 7, vol. 3)
Channing, A Short History of the United States (sec. 9, 10, 11, 12)
Montgomery, Leading Facts of American History (chap. 6, 7, 8, 9)
1. Andrews, vol. 2 (pp. 289-299) 3. Grose, Aliens or Americans (p. 30)
2. Mumford, Golden Day (p. 33)



of the Industrial Revolution. Around 1814-1820 slums began to appear in the larger cities and manufacturing centers.¹

In politics party spirit ran high with corresponding intrigues, as did the gambling mania and craze for banks.¹

Even the costumes of the times expressed an exuberance of individuality. 1830 was the era of enormous bonnets and leghorn hats massed high with artificial flowers and puffs of ribbon. Gentlemen wore bright blue walking coats, or brown, or green, punctuated with gilt buttons and high collars, while bottle green was the shade for general evening wear until 1850.²

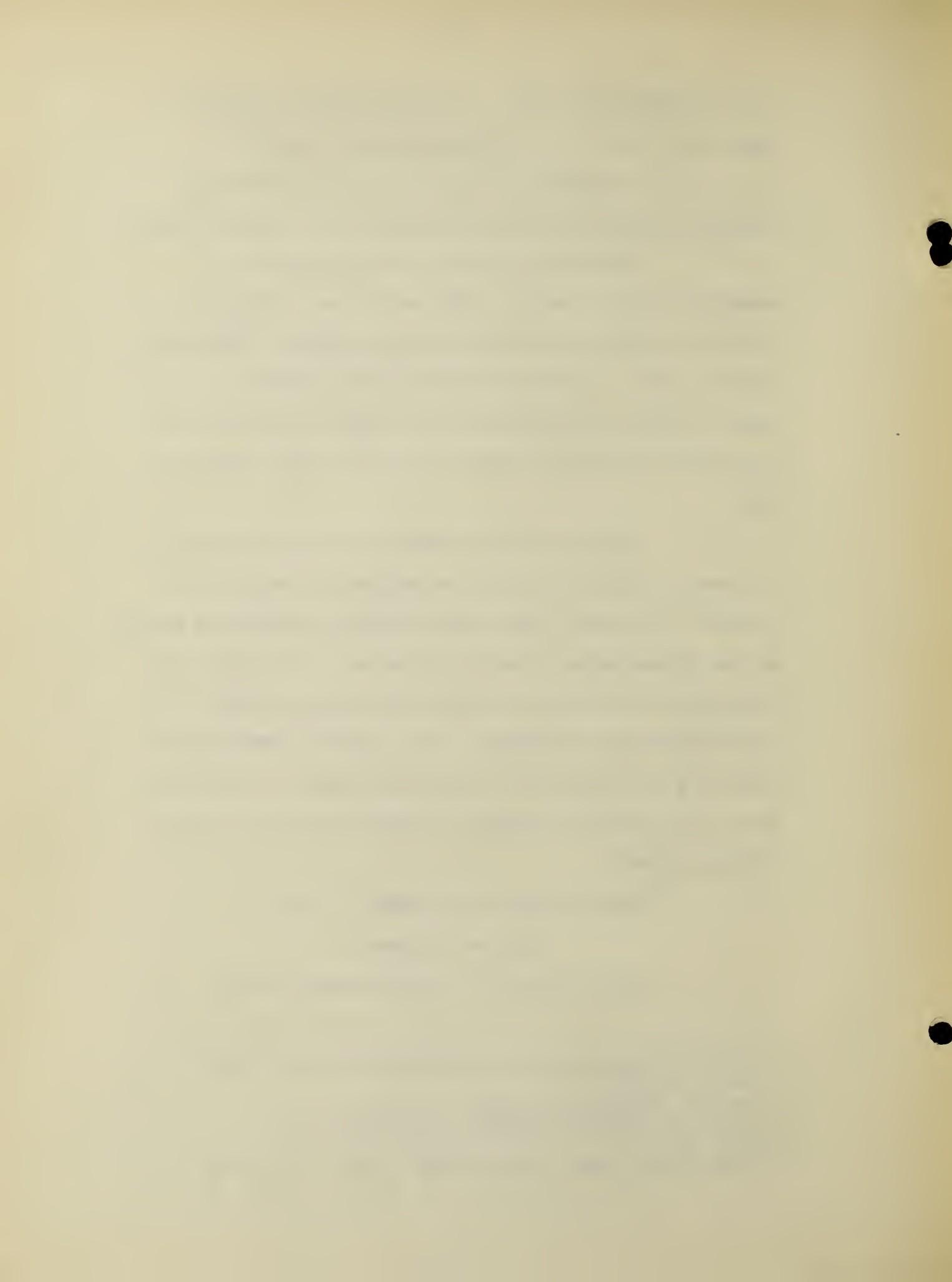
Over all this and through it vibrated a hope in the promise of the land itself- its newness, its vastness, its resource.³ It struck a spark from materialist and idealist alike. We find its enthusiasm in political speeches, in the poetry of William Cullen Bryant⁴ and the prose of Washington Irving.⁵ It expanded westward and southward. The spirit of adventure and opportunity was in the air. Later Walt Whitman in 1865 was to give it most adequate expression in lines such as we find in his Broadway Pageant:⁶

"I chant America, the mistress, I chant a

greater supremacy,

I chant projected a thousand blooming cities

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1. Andrews, History of the United States (vol. 3, pp. 130-132)
 2. Ibid, (p. 131)
 3. Mumford, Golden Day (p. 115)
 4. Richardson, Primer of American Literature (p. 38)
 5. Ibid, (p. 47)
 6. Page, Editor, Chief American Poets (p. 567, lls. 59-65)



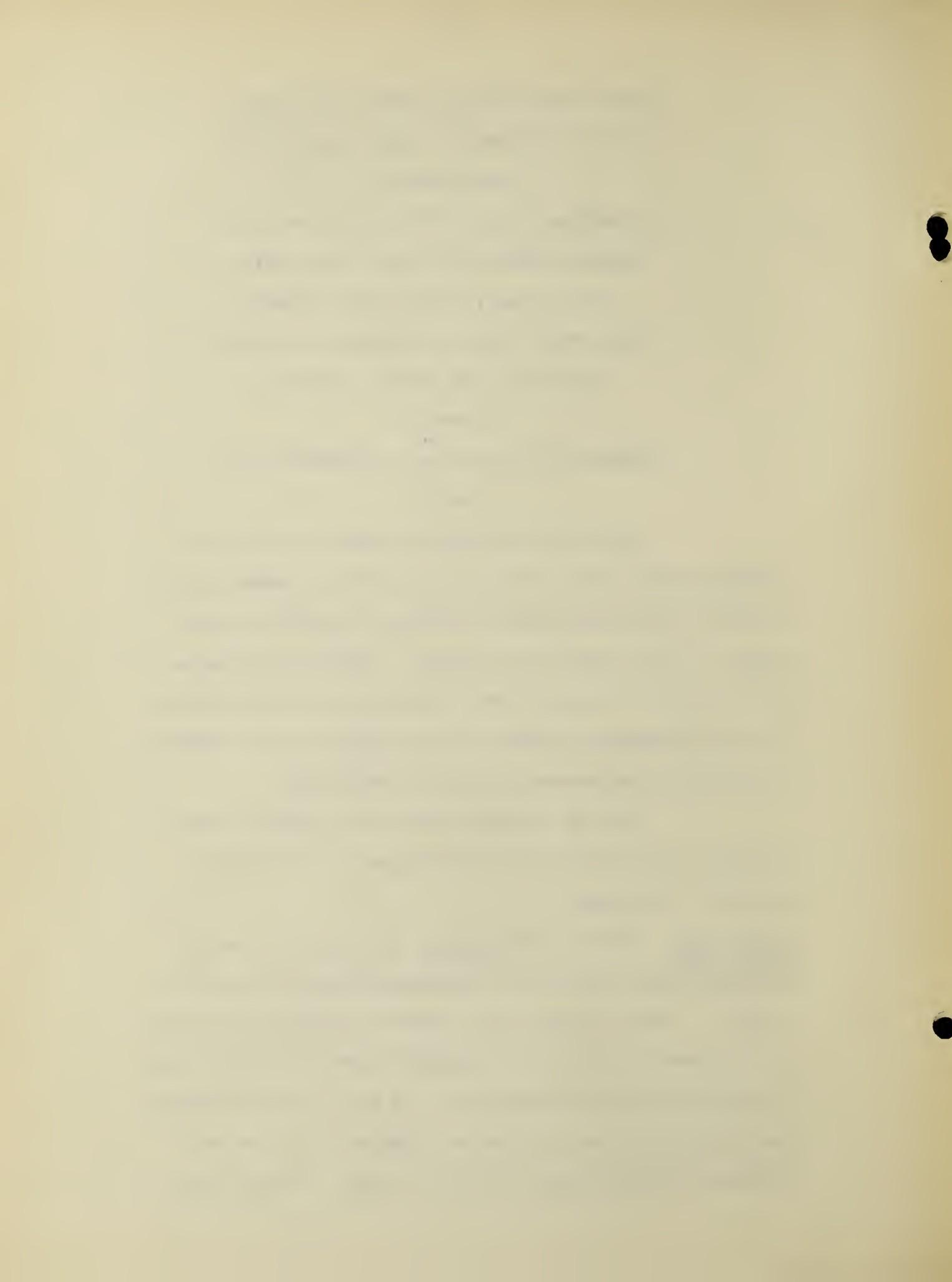
yet in time on those groups of sea islands,
My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the
archipelagoes,
My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,
Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having
done its work, races reborn, refreshed,
Lives, works resumed - the object I know not-
but the old, the Asiatic, renewed as
it must be

Commencing from this day, surrounded by the
world."

This was the fervor for freedom and vigor of
expectancy which found its way beneath social movements into the
individual consciousness and was nurtured by contact with the
Romantic Movement across the Atlantic. Everyman of yesterday
felt vast possibilities of power stirring his soul and doubted
not his promptings were those of genius which if it could find an
opportunity for expression, would be of world worth.

This was the hope which led the idealist beyond
his dismay at the increasing utilitarianism to vision fairer
republics of the mind.

Early Lives This was the zeitgeist into which were born in
and Training.
1803 Ralph Waldo Emerson, and fourteen years later, Henry David
Thoreau. Concord, Massachusetts, was the birthplace of the two,
where not so long before the "embattled farmer" had stood to fire
the opening shot of the Revolution. It was the oldest interior
town in the state, and had been as it was still a center of
political and intellectual influence, a seat of justice, and a



local center of trade.¹ Daniel Webster tried a case in the Concord court in 1843.² Teams from New Hampshire and Vermont would stop at Concord taverns on their way to Boston, often selling and buying in the Concord public square,² exchanging new gossip with village inhabitants on long sunny afternoons while their horses dozed by the curbstone. Still for all that, Concord was a quiet town, dotted with rambling white farm houses, most of them homes of sturdy, industrious farmers.³ Beyond the knots of village life lay many square miles still uncultivated along the Concord and Assabet rivers, brooks, meadows, and woodlands, with now and then a glimpse of mountains on the horizon- a standing invitation for those who liked country walks.

There was no great contrast between wealth and poverty in the Concord of the early nineteenth century. Culture of the upper classes and frugality of the lower blended in preference for a simple way of living.⁴ There was to be sure a social life one side of which branched into fashion and pinochle parties while another group met to discuss problems of trade, politics, art, literature or religion, but even here democracy was the prevailing note.⁴

Here was more than the usual amount of village tradition- "perpetuity and hereditary transmission of everything that by nature and good sense can be inherited".

Ralph Waldo Emerson came of eight generations of Puritan clergymen on the side of his father, William Emerson.⁵ His

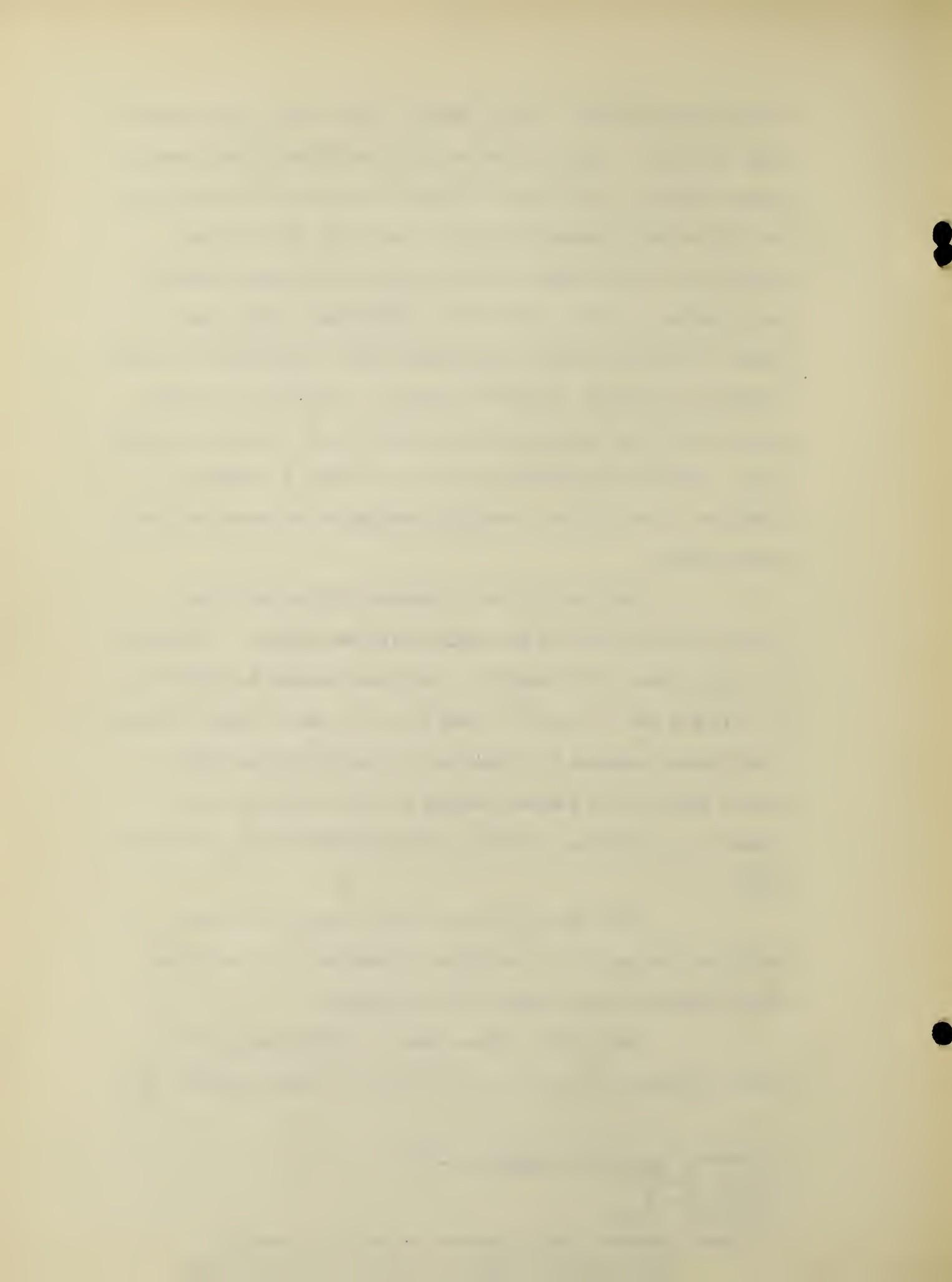
1. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (p. 32)

2. Ibid, (p. 35)

3. Ibid, (p. 36)

4. Sanborn, (p. 38)

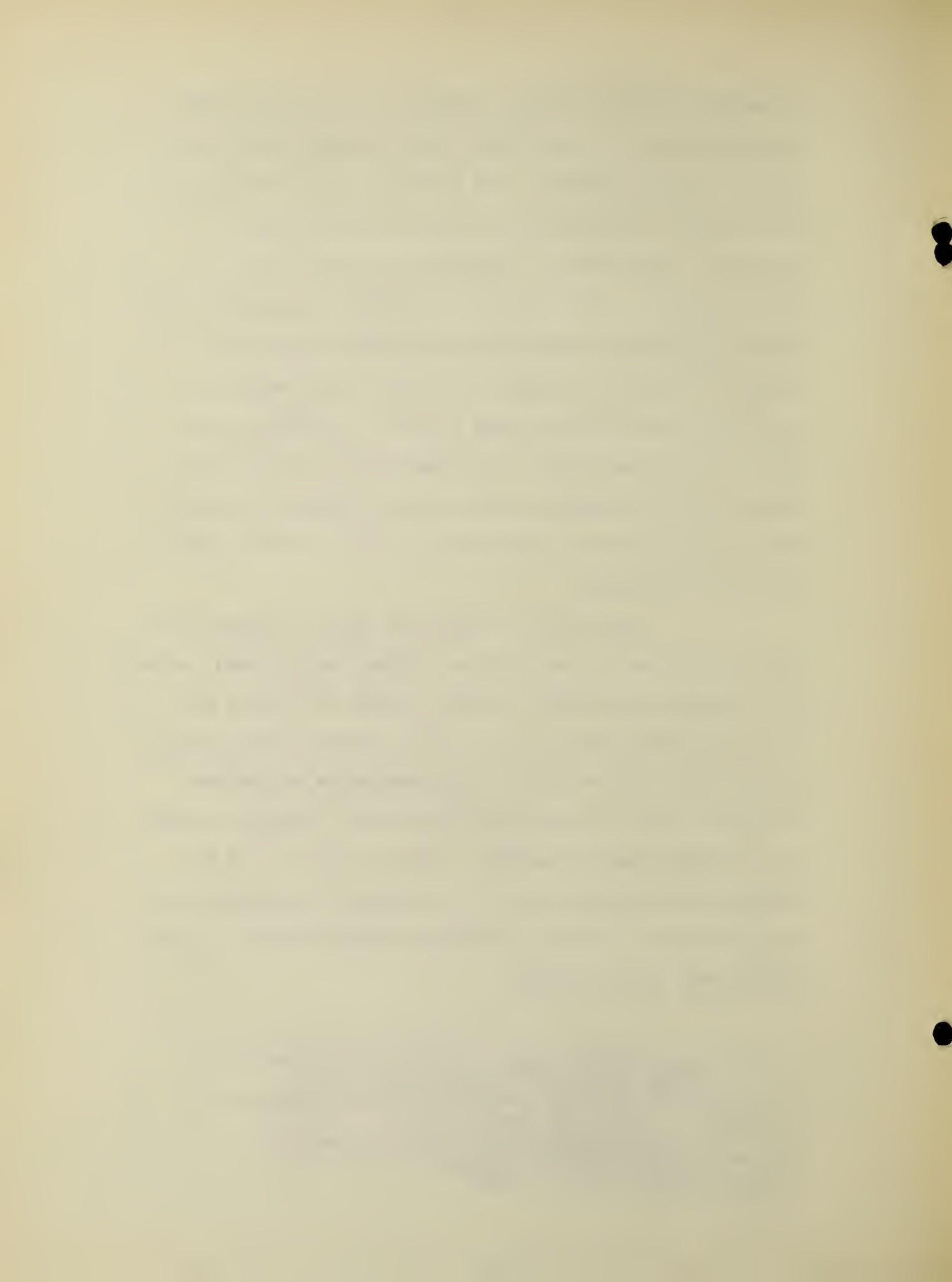
5. Richard Garnet's Life of Emerson, quoted in preface to "Representative Men", A. L. Burt & Co., publishers.



grandfather had been minister in Concord at the opening of the Revolution, and it is said to have urged the Minute Men to stand ground near his parsonage.¹ His father was also a preacher at First Church in Boston which as early as this had become Unitarian, a man of Social disposition and of some degree of literary talent. His mother was Ruth Haskins, through her long married life known as Madame Emerson,² who with her "native serenity"² brought up a family of five little boys "wisely and well"³ after their father's death in 1811. The family pride, particularly characteristic in the New England of this period, never failed the Emersons in their extreme poverty nor daunted their conviction that the boys should be well educated⁴ presumably for the ministry.

Ralph Waldo's childhood is nowhere recorded in any degree of fulness. Mrs. Bradford, William Emerson's ward, speaks of his surprising memory.⁵ We catch glimpses of him here and there as a "spiritual looking boy in blue nankeen", grave though not shy with visitors from his first experiences of them,⁵ but having the regular boy games with his brothers, and writing verse for all their special occasions.⁶ Later in Boston we see him driving his grandfather's cow out to pasture in the Common,⁷ and always reading all the books which the poverty and ideals of the family group would allow him.⁶

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1. Page, Chief American Poets, (biographical sketches p. 663)
 2. Cabot, Memoir of Ralph W. Emerson (vol. 1, p. 7)
 3. Biographical sketch by Edward W. Emerson in Nature (p. 14)
 4. Woodberry, Ralph Waldo Emerson (p. 3)
 5. Garnett, Representative Men (p. 12) A. L. Burt & Co.
 6. Cabot, Memoir of Ralph W. Emerson (vol. 1, p. 10)
 7. Chief American Poets (p. 664)



The Aunt Mary Moody Emerson is remembered from early times as cheering the boys with tales of heroic endeavor where there was no food to be had, in the days when Ralph and his elder brother shared one great coat¹ between them. She was a strange, austere, lonely, dark Sybilline creature of brilliant mind and compelling force of character². Emerson's later diaries are full of the influence which she had over the nephews for whom she had high aspirations. In the journal of 1857 he remembers the prayers which his Aunt Mary had written for the oldest brother William to read aloud at the family morning prayer meetings, and realizes how, when years after he came to write sermons for his church, the "prophetic and apocalyptic phrases" which she had used in those same prayers, rang in his ears. Later when at Harvard he copied whole extracts of her letters to him and of his replies into the journals. She was a constant irritant to his independence. The clear logic of her argument cut intensely into any too hazy generalizations of his. For his doubting she has lines which his own ringing sentences of Self Reliance were to match:

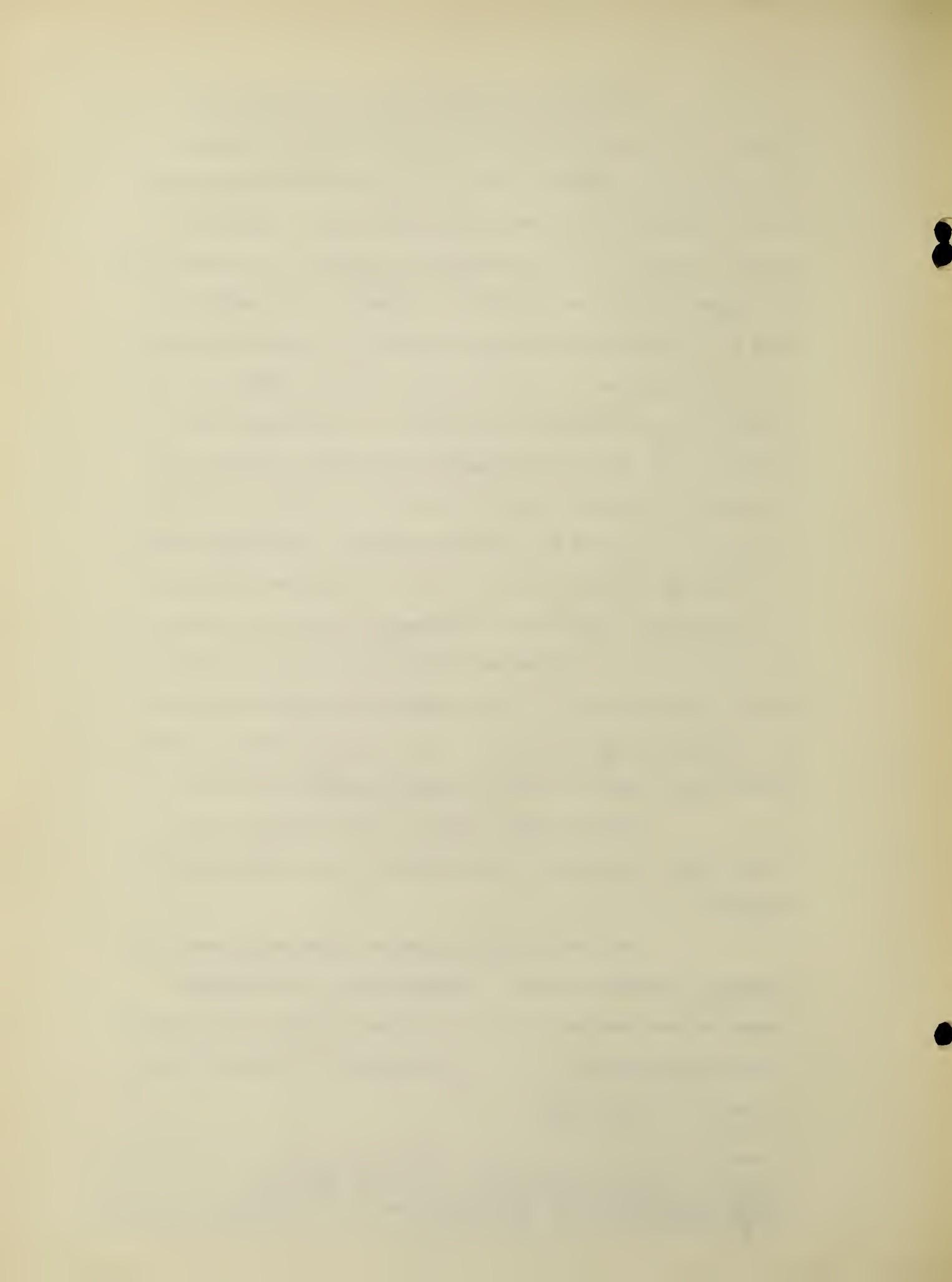
"Scorn trifles, lift your aims, do what you are afraid to do. Sublimity of character must come from sublimity of motive."³

Her love for Nature kindles in his own appreciation a sense of communion with it. Charles Emerson, the youngest nephew and her favorite, wrote of her: "As by seeing a high tragedy, reading a true poem so by society with her one's mind is electrified and purged."

1. Garnett, Representative Men (p. 12) A. L. Burt & Co.

2. Mary Moody Emerson by Ralph Waldo Emerson in Biographical Sketches

3. Emerson, R. W., - Mary Moody Emerson



Her religion was a stern exaltation in solitude which after all ideally had no compromise with the Calvinism she exhorted her friends to. Her whole life was "devoted to find some new truth" which should link her "closer to God".¹

Her Puritan suppression of any suggestion of levity weighed upon Emerson's natural seriousness with the result that his early diaries are full of self-reproach at any trait of "youthful silliness",² and at twenty years of age he laments his "propensity to laugh, or rather snicker" which makes him ill at ease among men.³

Dr. Ezra Ripley, the village bulwark of Calvinism, the iron-gray deacon, sovereign of his people, who managed the church, schools, society meetings and for a time the Lyceum as he liked, was another of the Concord influences in Ralph Waldo Emerson's boyhood.⁴ He often took the lad driving with him when he made parish calls and amused him with tales of the various Concord families whose houses they passed.⁵ Finally, when the Emerson family fortunes were at lowest ebb, he married Emerson's grandmother and took the whole family, boys and all, home to live with him in the old Manse.⁶ His impatient scorn of Transcendentalism, the childlike simplicity of his faith, his love for story-telling and his credulity are all matters of Concord tradition.⁶ Here are some typical tales from Emerson's journal of August 18, 1838.

"Dr. Ripley prays for rain with great explicitness on Sunday, and on Monday the showers fell. When I spoke of the speed with which his

1. Ibid, quoted from Miss Emerson's diary

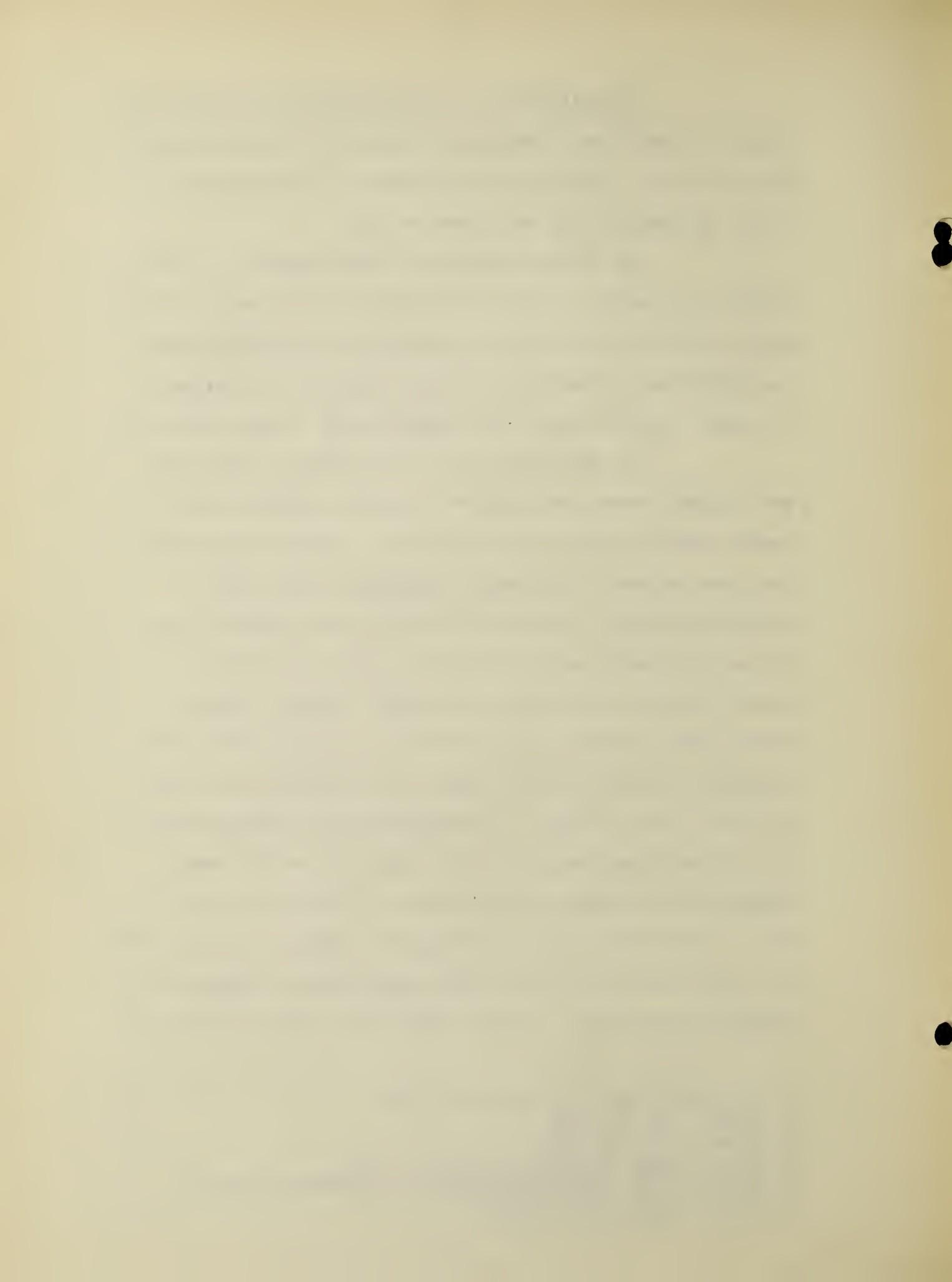
2. Journal, May 13, 1822

3. Journal, April 19, 1824

4. Cabot, Memoirs of Ralph W. Emerson (p. 35)

5. Emerson, R. W., Dr. Ezra Ripley, D.D. (Biographical Sketch)

6. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau



prayers were answered, the good man looked modest." Emerson recalls a time when he had been helping the Doctor and his hired man rake in his hay against the approach of a summer thunderstorm. "I well remember his pleading, almost reproachful looks at the sky, when the thundershower was coming up. He raked very fast, then looked at the cloud, and said, 'We are in the Lord's hand: mind your rake, George! We are in the Lord's hand.' and seemed to say, 'You know me; this field is mine,- Dr. Ripley's- thine own servant.'"

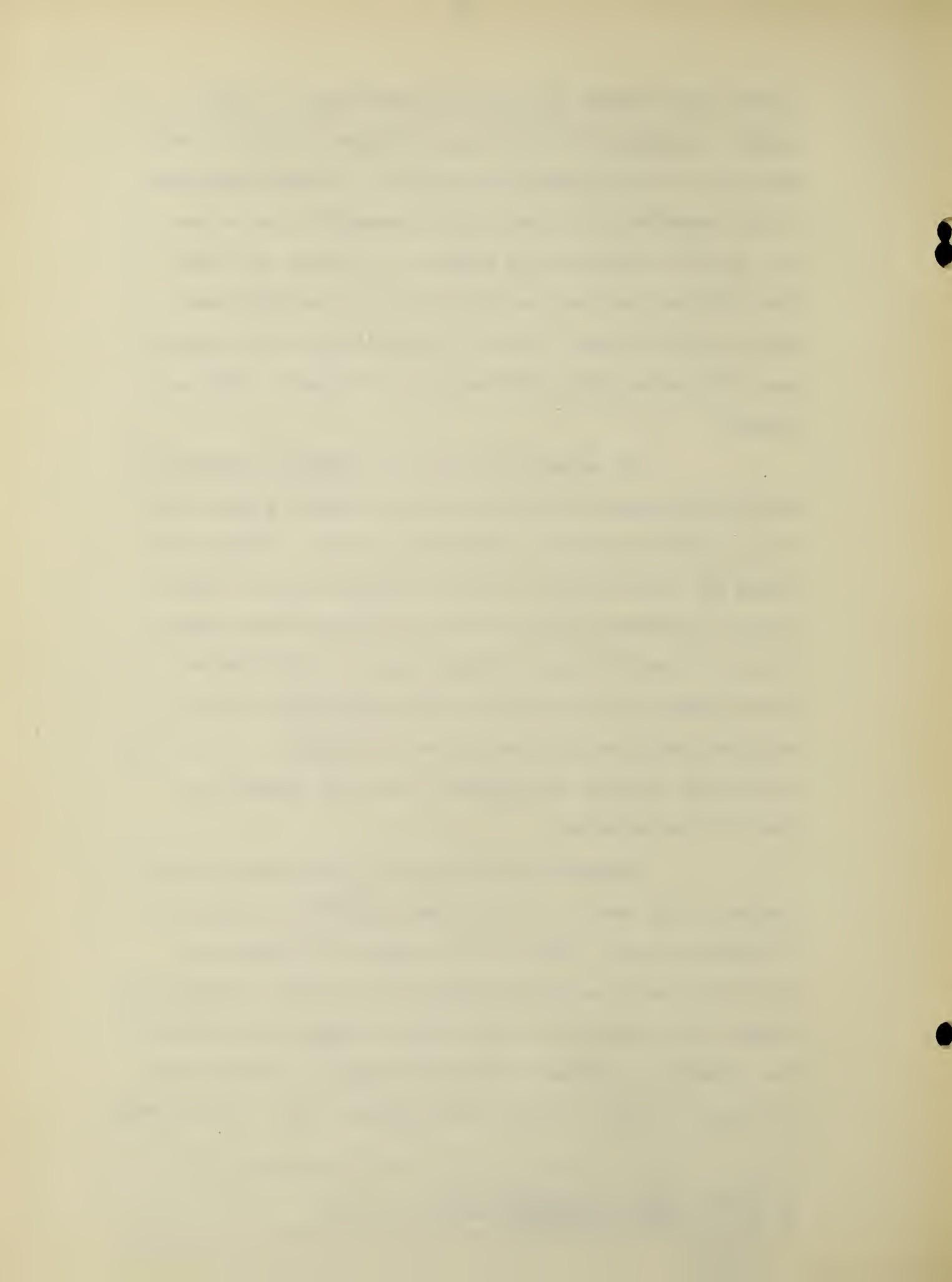
The impression of his life on Emerson is summarized best by a paragraph on the good doctor in Emerson's journal just after the former's funeral. (September 21, 1841.) "Great, grim, silent men (the Puritans), I belong by natural affinity to other thoughts and schools than yours, but my affection hovers respectfully about your retiring footprints, your unpainted churches, strict platform, and sad offices: the iron-gray deacon and the wearisome prayer rich with the diction of the ages." A bit of the earnestness, idealism, and austerity of such men entered into Emerson's own character.

Samuel Hoar is another name which stood for much in Emerson's early manhood. The man was preeminently consular,- a statesman, lawyer, legislator, and leader of the element in Concord interested in trade, politics, and fine arts.¹ He was state senator in 1825 and 1833, a Whig member of Congress from 1835-1837.² His influence upon Emerson is again best shown by a passage from the journal of 1838.³ "I know a man who tries time. The expression

1. Sanborn, Henry D. Thoreau (p. 63)

2. International Encyclopedia (vol. 11, p. 342)

3. Quoted by Edward Waldo Emerson in notes to Emerson's Biographical Sketches.



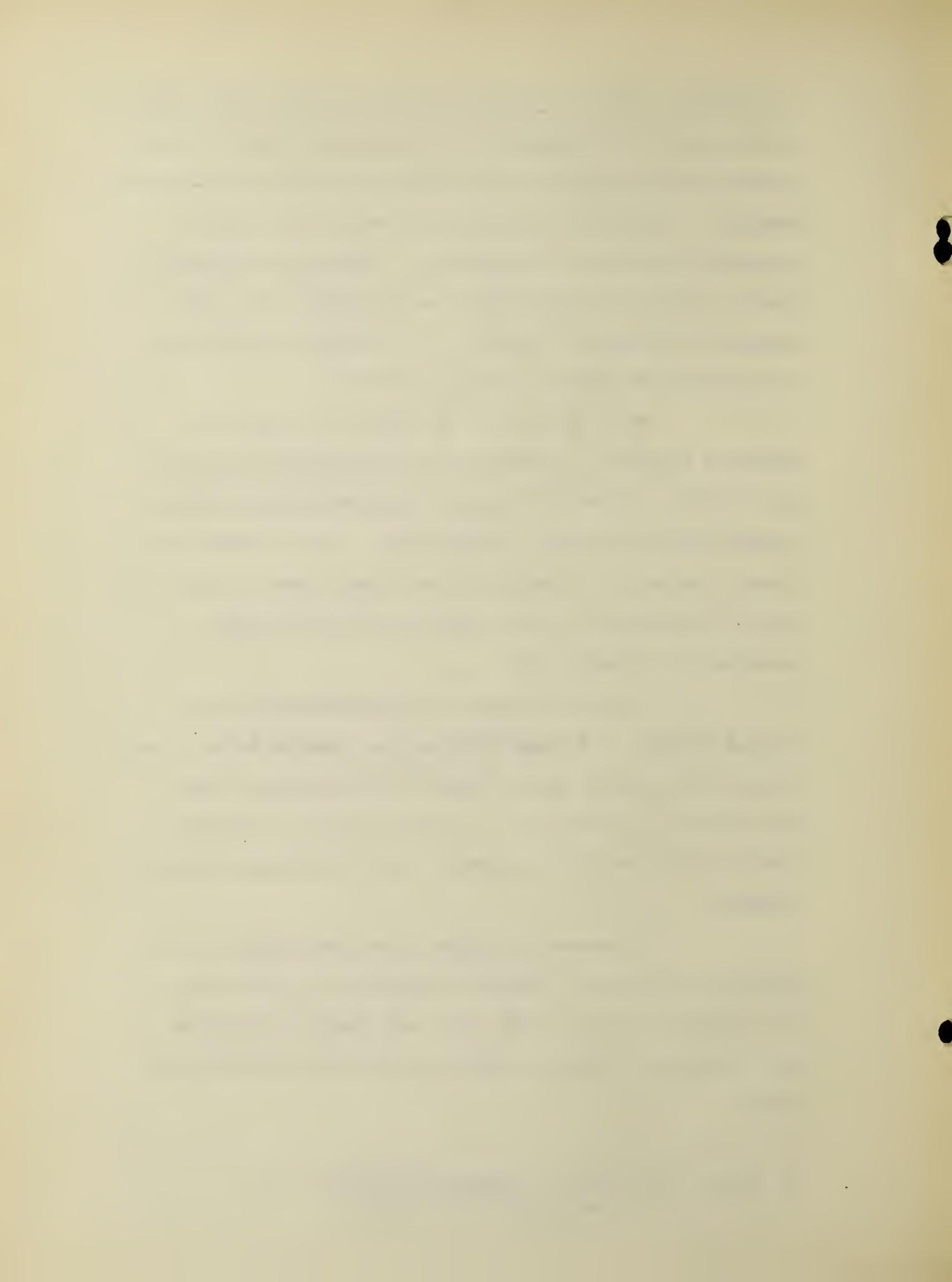
of his face is that of a patient judge who has nowise made up his opinion, who fears nothing but puts nature on her merits. Conservative and constructive, his presence presupposes a well-ordered society. If these did not exist, they would begin to exist through his steady will and endeavors. Uniform self-respect and natural reverence for every other man, the strength of a chief united to the modesty of a child. . . . Character made him the conscience of the community in which he lived."

These were some of the great men and women in Emerson's childhood, but many more were the influences that went out into him: from staunch farmers and blacksmiths, from philosophies and early ambitions of country boys. We find traces of all these in his work. Concord rivers and Concord woods had their own share of instruction as well as the books he read whenever opportunity gave them to him.

In 1817 he attained the long-anticipated goal of Harvard College¹. His formal schooling had commenced before he was three, at which mature age his father's diary notes that "Ralph does not read very well yet." At ten years he had attended the Boston Latin School where he showed a talent for speech-making and rhyming.

At Harvard his meagre fortune was assisted by his position as President's freshman or messenger to announce orders and regulations to the student body, which gave him his lodging, and a position as waiter at Commons gave him three fourths of his board.¹

1. Garnett, Introduction to Representative Men (p. 19)
Published by A. L. Burt & Co.



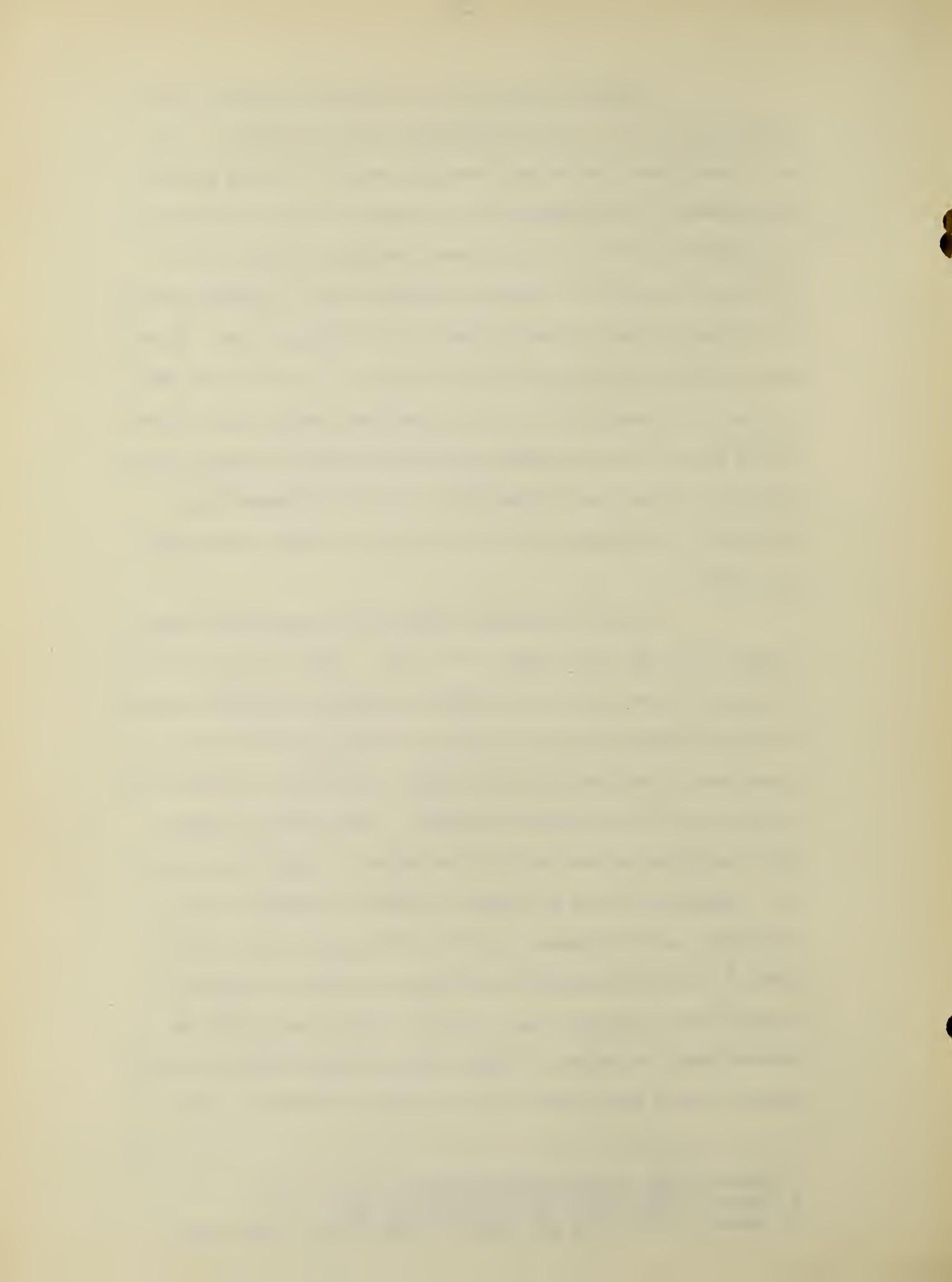
Harvard College was in its manner of instruction at that time more like a boy's preparatory school of to-day.¹ There were almost daily recitations from each member of a class and the object seemed to be, according to Mr. Cabot,¹ "to give and receive a certain dose of learning without much thought on either side of there being anything of intrinsic interest in it." Emerson was not a brilliant student; in most respects a very ordinary one. He was nearly brought into disgrace his first year at college by his backwardness in Mathematics.² Moreover, mere facts which did not come to him through his own immediate experience seemed to have no appeal for him. He met them perfunctorily, with his characteristic aloofness, and apparently lived in a world very remote from their intrusion.

Some few exceptions there were to the usual student-teacher classroom relationships of the day. These were the classes of George Ticknor, Professor of Modern Languages, and Edward Everett, Professor of Greek, both of whom tried to bring back from years in Europe some of the methods of university instruction there, and some of the spirit of the Romantic Movement.¹ From these men Emerson took long notes and read much in the trends of thought they suggested. Especially did he fall under the spell of Everett's famous magnetism and his classroom quotations from Homer, Milton, and Byron.³ He and his brother William used to haunt the forums and churches where the orator was to appear, and went away after his address richly satisfied. Emerson was no doubt thinking of himself and his brother when he wrote in his journal of September 1842:

1. Cabot, Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson (vol. 1, p. 55)

2. Garnett, Introduction to Representative Men (p. 20)

3. Emerson, R. W., Life and Letters in New England (Social Aims)

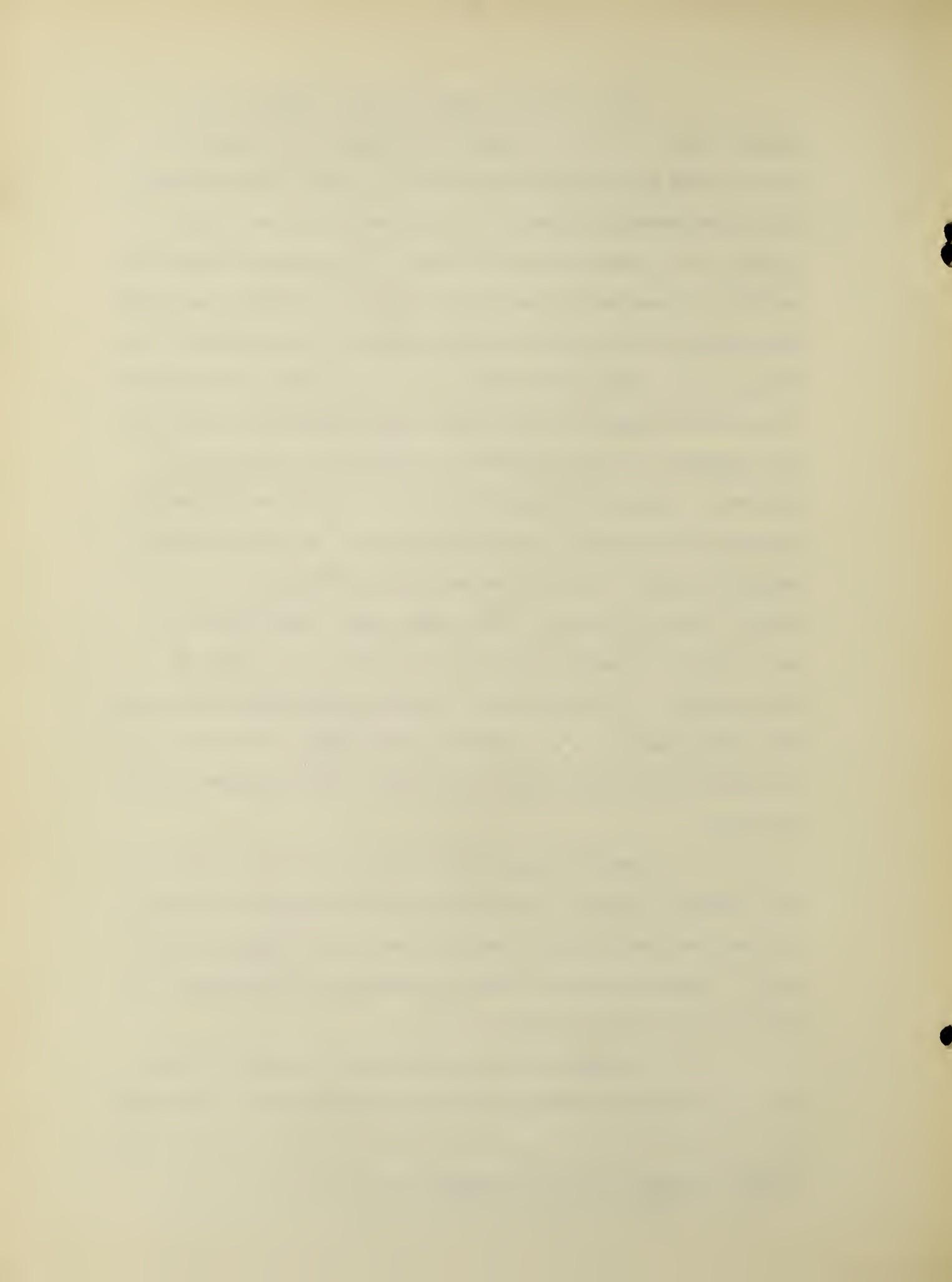


"This eminently beautiful person (Everett) was followed like an Apollo from church to church, wherever the fame that he would preach led, by all the most cultivated and intelligent youths with grateful admiration. His appearance in any pulpit lighted up all countenances with delight. The smallest anecdote of behaviour or conversation was eagerly caught and repeated, and every young scholar could repeat brilliant sentences from his sermons with mimicry good or bad of his voice. The church was dismissed, but the bright image of that eloquent form followed the boy home to his bedchamber, and not a sentence was written in a theme, not a declamation attempted in the College Chapel, but showed the omnipresence of his genius to the youthful heads. He thus raised the standard of taste in writing and speaking in New England." In another journal of June 10, 1838, Emerson says: "Everett has put more stories, sentences, verses, names in amber for me than any other person." In college diaries we find long passages prefaced by "Mr. Everett says . . .". He wrote a prize essay on Socrates, and at the end of his Senior year a long letter to Plato appears also in his diary.

Emerson's nature found further chance of expression in Levi Frisbies' classes of Moral Philosophy and he labored with long interest over Edward Tyrrel Channing's exercises in English Composition.¹ Frequent drafts for themes and suggestions for subjects are found in his journals of this period.

The rest of his college education he found for the most part outside the classroom, in the college library. Shakespeare

1. Cabot, Memoirs of Ralph W. Emerson (vol. 1, p. 56)

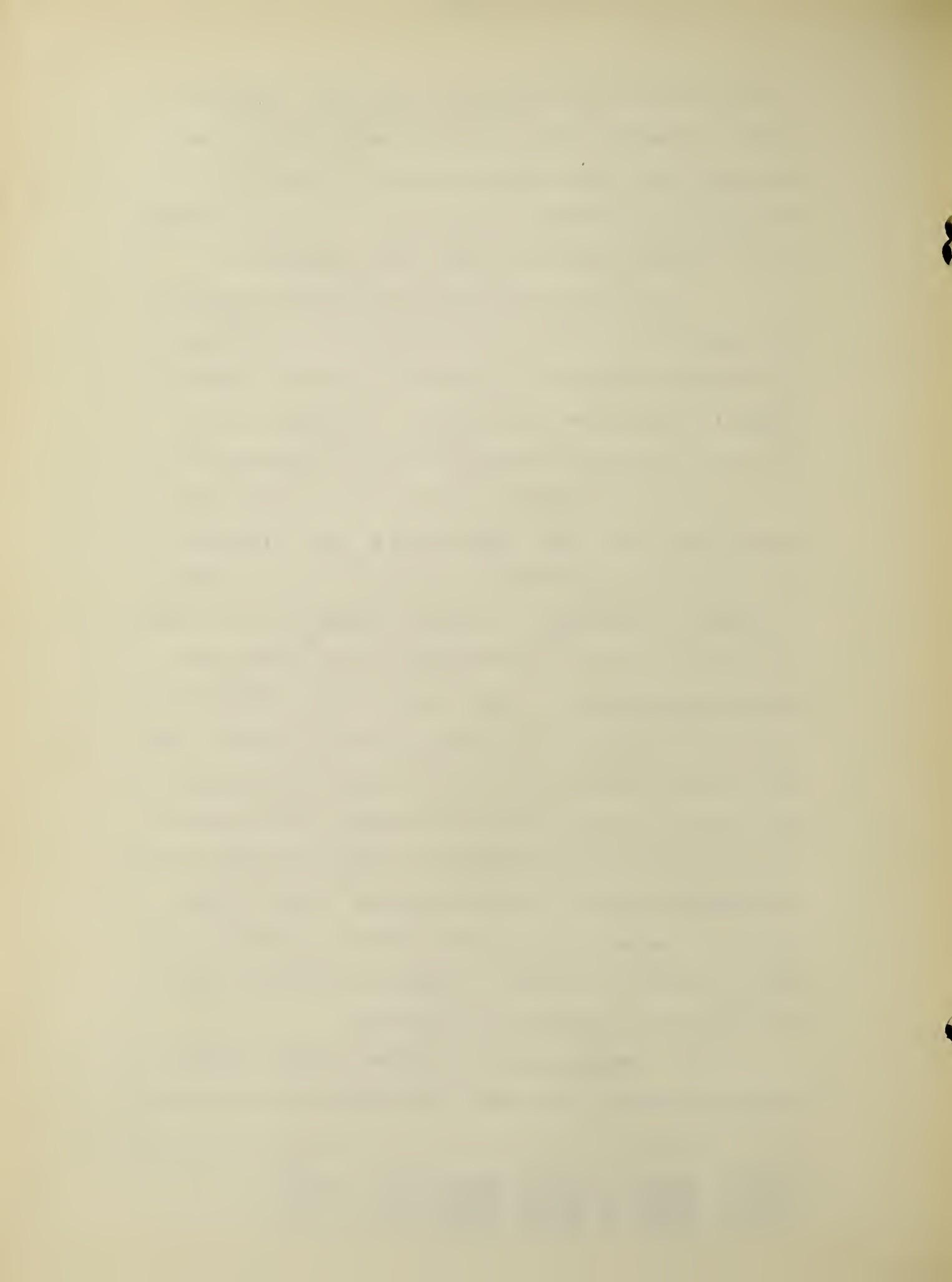


he loved and many of the early English dramatists. Aristotle, Socrates, Wordsworth, Chaucer, De Stael, Pascal, Thomas A Kempis, Goethe, Coleridge, Marcus Aurelius, and passages from Eastern Scriptures are much quoted in the journals of his Junior and Senior years. Montaigne seems to have been a later enthusiasm.

As for his social life in college after classroom and working hours, it did not include a large group of intimates. Emerson's boyhood aloofness and gravity deepened as he grew into manhood. He was not one who sought many friendships, but by degrees some of the more scholarly members of the class began to find him good company, knowing much less than they might have wished about the text-books common to all of them, but far more than most of them about literature, and, what is more, a thoughtful companion in discussion¹. He was the leading spirit in a small book club which was organized to purchase English Reviews, the North American Review (just coming into prominence then) and literature of the day which the college library did not contain.² The member having the most money at the time bought a desired book, which was then to be read aloud and discussed at club meetings.² This group finally called themselves the Pythologian Society. From the secretary's reports in Emerson's journals it seems to have grown into a medium for philosophical discussion and debate more than continuing as a book club. Perhaps an evolution from the times when no one had money to buy a new book.

Graduation came for Emerson in 1821.³ He held the doubtful distinction of class poet (after seven others had refused

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1. Cabot, Memoirs of Ralph W. Emerson (vol. 1, p. 59)
 2. Cabot, Memoirs of Ralph W. Emerson (vol. 1, p. 60)
 3. Cabot, Memoirs of Ralph W. Emerson (vol. 1, p. 61)



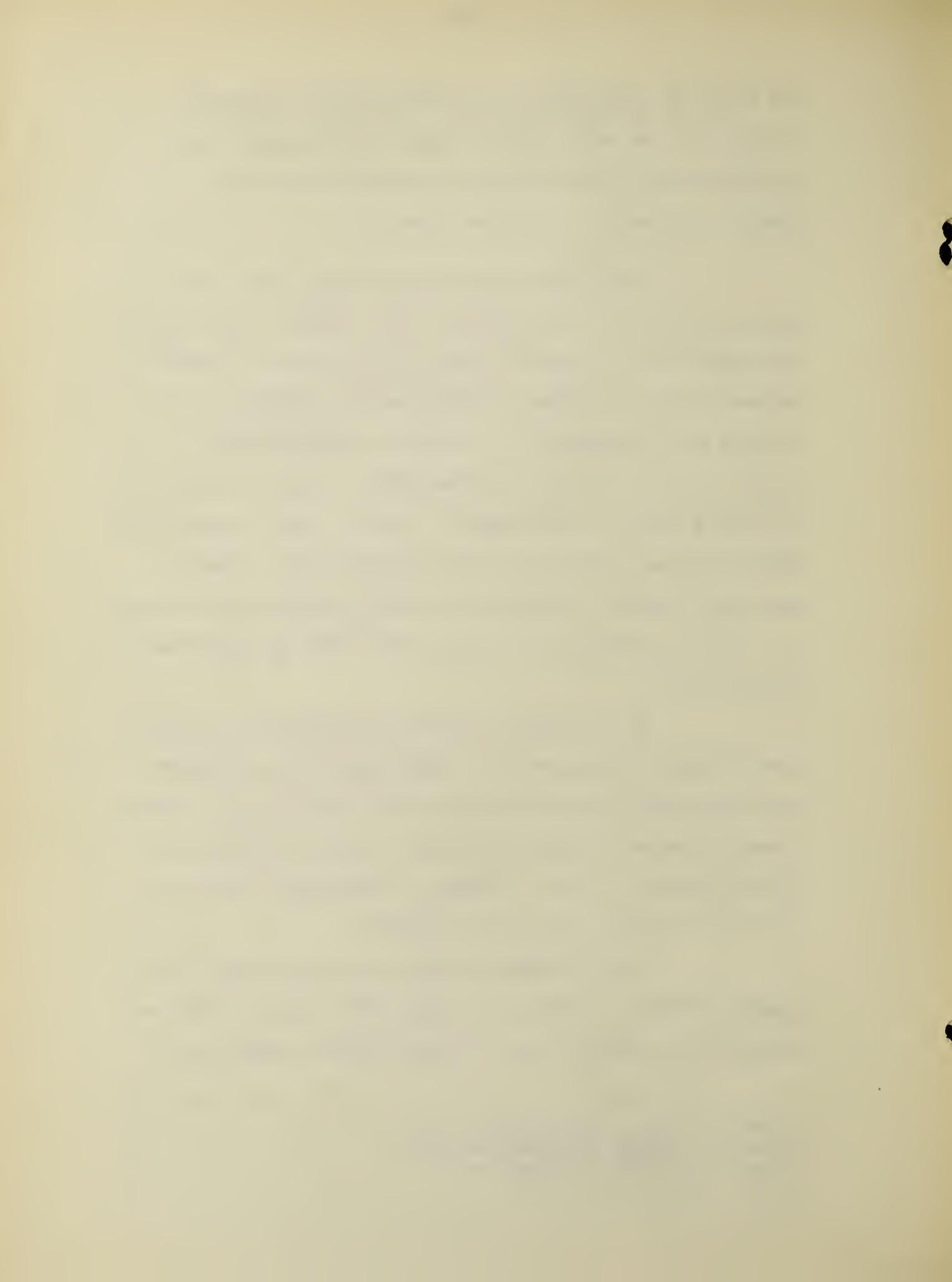
the honor) and, Commencement over, passed down the elm-shaded avenue out of the college gates, a grave, dignified young senior little presaging to the majority of his acquaintances the popular individualist philosopher he was to be.

Henry David Thoreau was born July 12, 1817, the summer of the year that Emerson was to enter college.¹ His paternal grandfather was a Frenchman¹ from whom he got the trait of "Canadian voyageur sublimed" remarked by Emerson,² and his grandmother on his father's side a Scotchwoman.¹ His mother was Cynthia Dunbar, a minister's daughter of Keene, New Hampshire, who added her strain of New England Yankee to his ancestry.¹ She was a tall, handsome, high-spirited woman, a great lover of talk and dress, and a friend of Mary Moody Emerson.¹ The father of the four Thoreau children, Helen, John, Henry, and Sophia, was a short, deaf, kindly man who seemed to be always busy.²

As in Emerson's childhood the leading village personages of Thoreau's early years were Samuel Hoar, and Dr. Ripley³ who had baptized Henry and always took a kindly interest in his welfare. I can find nowhere in Thoreau's writings, letters or journals any direct reference to either. Neither of them seemed to have come as close to his life as they had to Emerson's.

Both John Thoreau, Senior, and his wife Cynthia were greatly interested in Botany and genuine nature lovers. They were noticed by the neighbors year after year studying flowers by the

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1. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (p. 8)
 2. Emerson, Journal for January 25, 1848
 3. Salt, Life of Henry Thoreau (p. 8)



Assabet River, Fairhaven, Lee's Hill, and in the Walden vicinity.¹

According to one good wife's account, one of the Thoreau children narrowly escaped being born on Lee's Hill.¹ As soon as each one of the four children was old enough to walk it was initiated into a study of Natural History which the two boys continued as long as they lived.¹

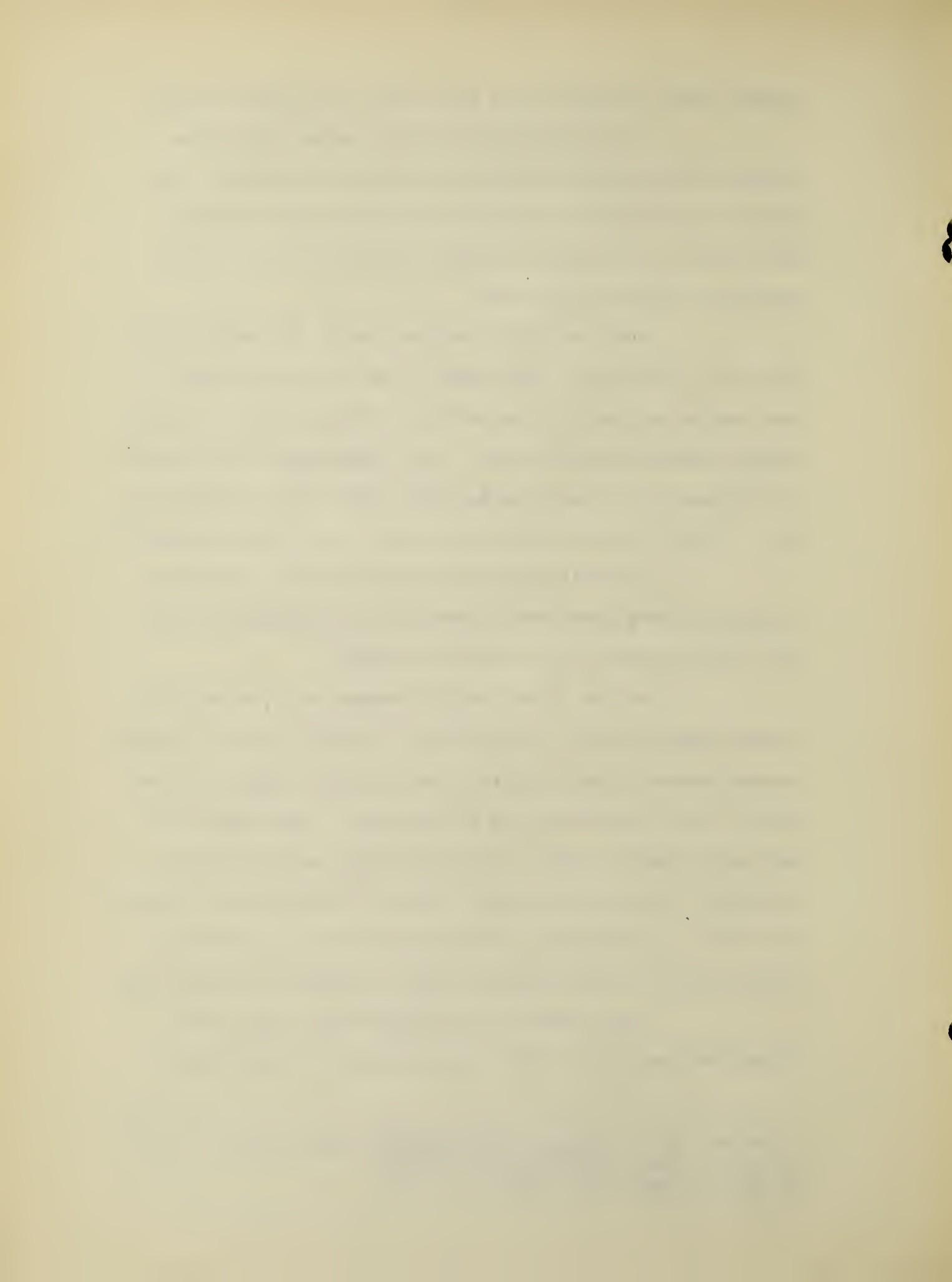
Partly because of extreme poverty and partly perhaps because Mrs. Thoreau had heard rumors of new food reforms which were soon to be advocated, the diet of the Thoreau family was almost purely vegetarian and fruitarian. One visitor says of the appetizing wholesomeness of their meals, "Their living was a revelation to me. I think they were twenty years ahead of the times in Concord."²

The family enjoyed a quiet distinction of their own in Concord through some innate quality of fine independence which was quite apart from social position or wealth.³

Reforms of the Romantic Movement were just beginning to make themselves felt in the Concord of Thoreau's boyhood. Ancient customs survived in daily collision or in friendly contact with new ideas⁴ of every conceivable form of liberalism. Mrs. Thoreau and her family engaged actively in the anti-masonic and anti-slavery agitation.⁴ The household became a sort of headquarters for fugitive slaves,⁴ and the memories of their terrified faces and oftentimes cruelly persecuted bodies went also into the making of the boy's life.

Henry Thoreau and his older brother, John, early became interested in the Indian relics and Indian stories which

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1. Emerson, E. W., Thoreau as Remembered by a Young Friend (p. 124)
 2. Ibid (p. 126, quoted from Horace Hosmer)
 3. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (pp. 30-31)
 4. Ibid (p. 29)



abounded in Concord.¹ This interest Thoreau maintained through life, and spent many weeks of his last illness in organizing material for a book about the American Indians. Characteristic of this early enthusiasm is a letter² of Henry's written to John in Taunton in the following manner, November 11, 1857.

"To John Thoreau (at Taunton)

(Written as from one Indian to another)

Musketaquid, 202 Summers, 2 Moons, 11 Suns,

--since the coming of the Pale Faces. (Nov. 11, 1837)

Tahatawan, Sachimaussan, to his brother sachem, Hopeful of Hopewell,
-hoping that he is well:-

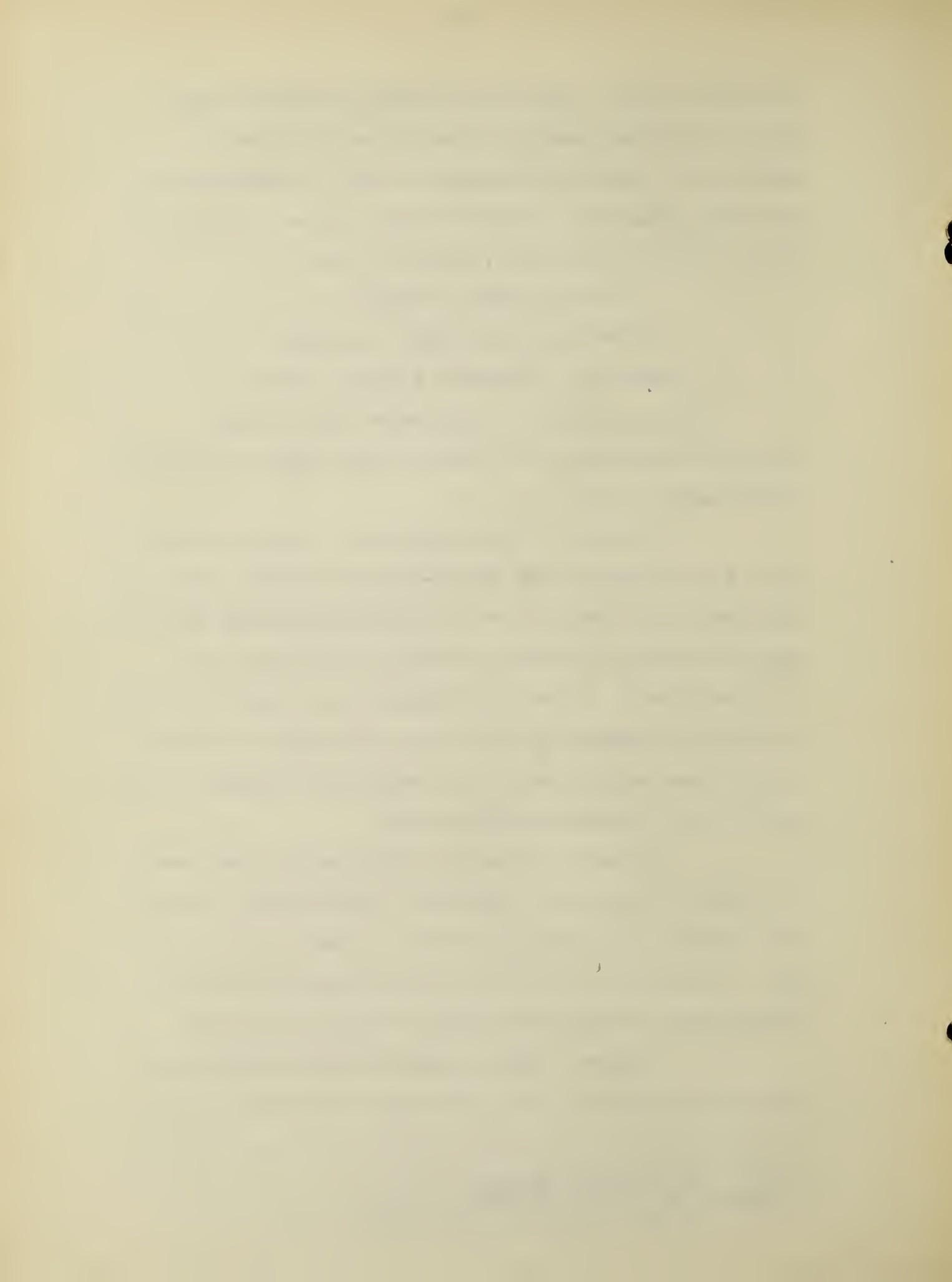
Brother: It is many suns that I have not seen the print of thy moccasins by our council-fire; and the Great Spirit has blown more leaves from the trees, and many clouds from the land of snows have visited our lodge; the earth has become hard, like a frozen buffalo-skin, so that the trampling of many herds is like the Great Spirit's thunder; the grass on the great fields is like the old man of many winters, and the small song-sparrow prepares for his flight to the land whence the summer comes.

Brother: I write these things because I know that thou lovest the Great Spirit's creatures, and wast wont to sit at thy lodge-door, when the maize was green, to hear the blue-bird's song. So shalt thou, in the land of spirits, not only find good hunting grounds and sharp arrow-heads, but much music of birds.

Brother: I need not tell thee how we hunted on the lands of the Dundees,- a great warchieff never forgets the bitter

1. Salt, Life of Henry D. Thoreau (p. 5)

2. Sanborn, Familiar Letters of Henry Thoreau (p. 14)



taunts of his enemies. Our young men called for strong water; they painted their faces and dug up the hatchet. But their enemies, the Dundees, were women; they hastened to cover their hatchets with wampum. Our braves are not many; our enemies took a few strings from the heap their fathers left them, and our hatchets are buried. But not Tahatawan's; his heart is of rock when the Dundees sing,- his hatchet cuts deep into the Dundee braves.

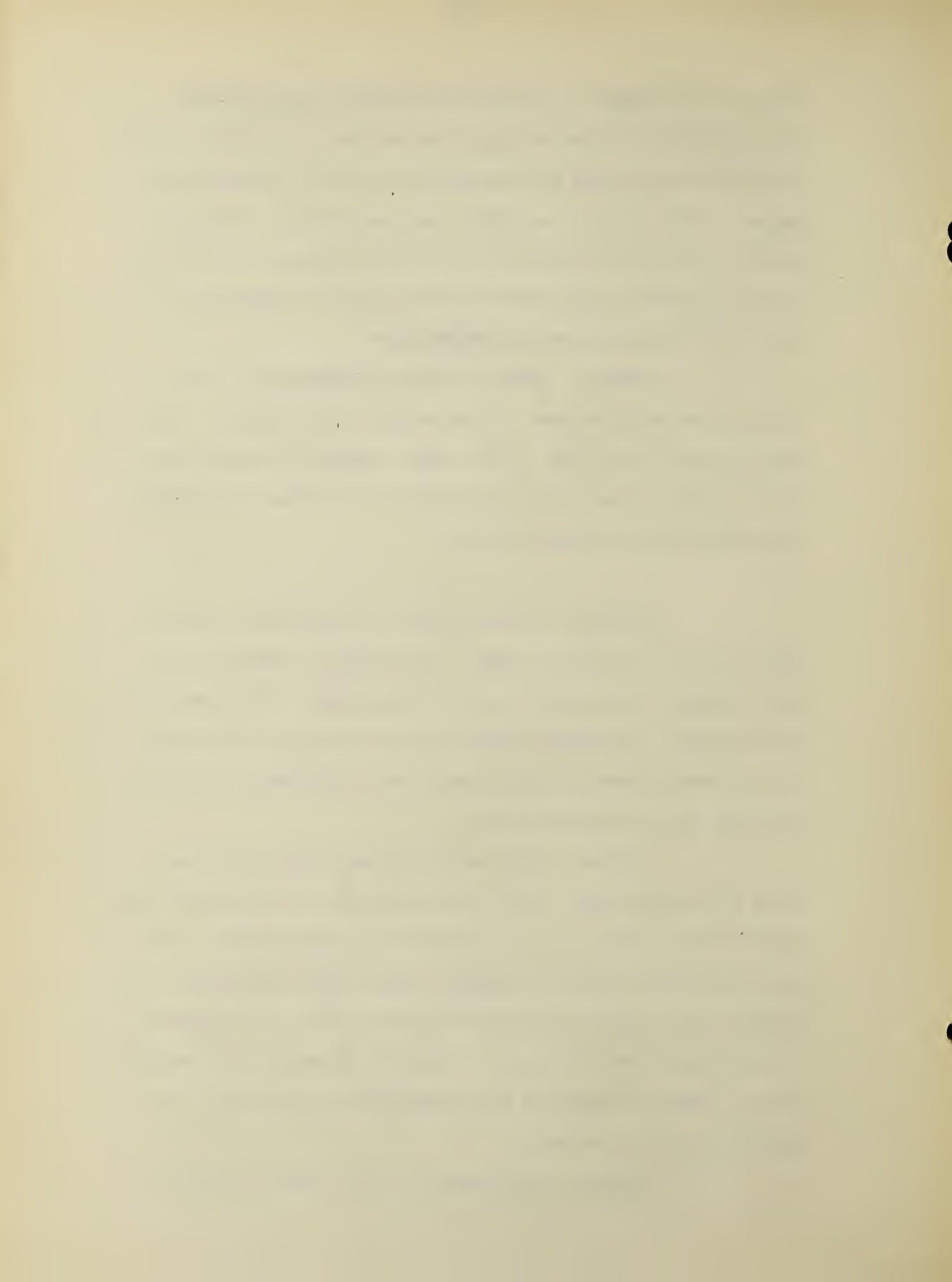
Brother: There is dust on my mocassins; I have journeyed to the White Lake, in the country of the Nulares. The Long-knife has been there,- like a woman I paddled his war-canoe. But the spirits of my father were angered; the waters were ruffled, and the Bad Spirit troubled the air.

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Brother: Art thou waiting for the spring, that the geese may fly low over thy wigwam? Thy arrows are sharp? Thy bow is strong? Has Anawan killed all the eagles? The crows fear not the winter. Tahatawan's eyes are sharp- he can track a snake in the grass, he knows a friend from a foe; he welcomes a friend to his lodge though the ravens croak.

Brother: Hast thou studied much in the medicine-books of the Pale-Faces? Dost thou understand the long talk of the Medicine whose words are like the music of the mocking-bird? But our chiefs have not ears to hear him; they listen like squaws to the council of old men,- they understand not his words. But, Brother, he never danced the war-dance, nor heard the warwhoop of his enemies. He was a squaw; he stayed by the wigwam when the braves were out, and tended the tame buffaloes.

Fear not; the Dundees have faint hearts and much



wampum. When the grass is green on the great fields, and the small titmouse returns again, we will hunt the buffalo together.

Brother: This is a long talk, but there is much meaning to my words; they are not like the thunder of canes when the lightning smites them. Brother, I have just heard thy talk and am well pleased; thou art getting to be a great Medicine. The Great Spirit confound the enemies of thy tribe.

Tahatawan

His Mark (a bow and arrow)"

At the age of ten, says Ellery Channing his friend, who has written the most comprehensive biography of him, "he had the firmness of an Indian; could repress pathos, and had such seriousness he was called 'judge'."¹ Henry Salt, another biographer, makes note also of his resemblance to the early American Redmen-in his sympathy with wild nature, his stoical reserve and his passive aquiescence with destiny.²

To Thoreau also, though not so directly as to Emerson came the influence of Mary Moody Emerson who always had a genuine interest in young people. She is one of the very few personalities mentioned in Thoreau's journals.³

November 13, 1851.

"Just spent a couple of hours (8-10) with Miss Mary Emerson at Holbrook. The wittiest and most vivacious woman that I know, certainly that woman among my acquaintance whom it is most profitable to meet, the least frivolous, who will most surely provoke

1. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (p. 49)

2. Salt, Life of Henry Thoreau (p. 29)

3. Emerson, R. W., Mary Moody Emerson (Biographical Sketches)

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to good conversation and the expression of what is in you.-----

Is is perhaps her greatest praise and peculiarity that she, more surely than any other woman, gives her companions occasion to utter his best thought.---- I never talked with any other woman who I thought accompanied me so far in describing a poetic experience.

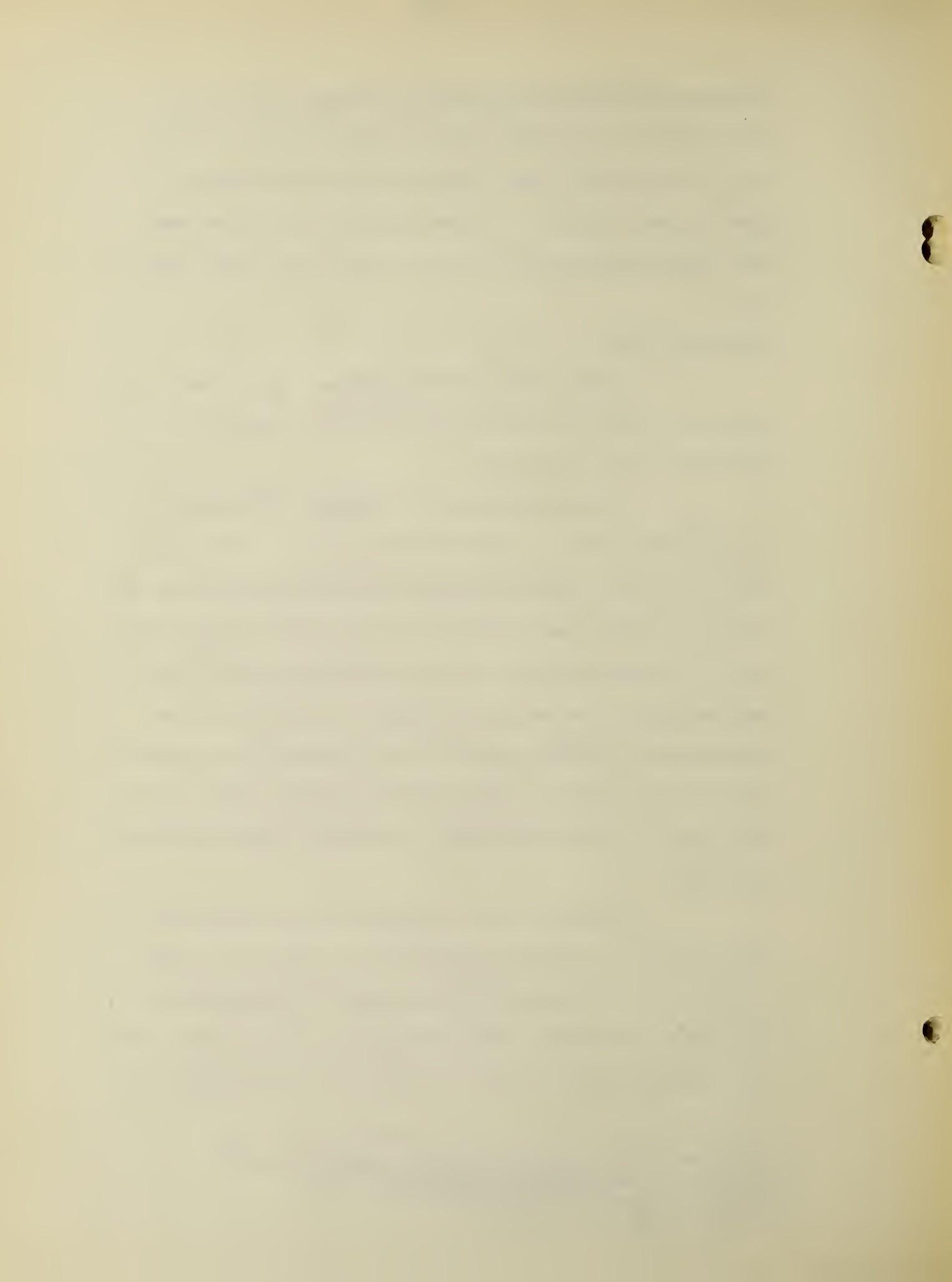
January 26, 1856.¹

Talking with Miss Mary Emerson. She is readier to take my view - look through my eyes for the time - than any young person that I know in the town.

Thoreau had prepared for college in the Concord Schools² and at the age of sixteen entered Harvard. His means of paying tuition were even more slender than Emerson's had been; his father, his older sister Helen who had begun to teach school, and some of his mother's sisters helped, and Thoreau was able to get the same pecuniary assistance that Emerson had had through the recommendation of Emerson himself who had been informed of Henry's promise by Dr. Ripley.³ Also as was usual in those days, he had extra funds from the country school teaching he did during college vacations.

About his career in Harvard we know comparatively little, though we learn from Sanborn⁴ that he enjoyed his studies in Rhetoric with Professor Channing and was an excellent student in Mathematics. His later fondness for Homer and Plato together with his letters home, two of which are written in unusually good Latin,

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1. Shepard, Editor, Heart of Thoreau's Journals (p. 233)
 2. Emerson, E. W., Thoreau as Remembered (p. 15)
 3. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (p. 51)
 4. Ibid (p. 52)



give us reason to suppose that he also enjoyed his studies in the classics. We find also references to his fondness for poetry, especially that from Gower to Chaucer and down through the age of Elizabeth.¹

Thoreau even more than Emerson seems to have got the greater part of his college education from the Harvard library which he counselled Emerson's son Edward in later years "was the best gift Harvard had to offer."²

His social life at Harvard seems to have been even more restricted than Emerson's. He is described by one of his classmates as "cold and unimpressible; evidently he did not care for people. His reverie hung always about him. His eyes seldom left the ground even in his most earnest conversations with you."⁴ Still it seems in spite of this impression of one of his fellow students that he was not altogether unsocial. At Harvard he probably first became acquainted with the Salem poet, Jones Very, his instructor in Greek, later to be a friend in Transcendentalism. Moreover, a letter written to him May, 1836, by another of his classmates seems to show that he enjoyed an account of college boy pranks however little he might wish to take actual part in them.

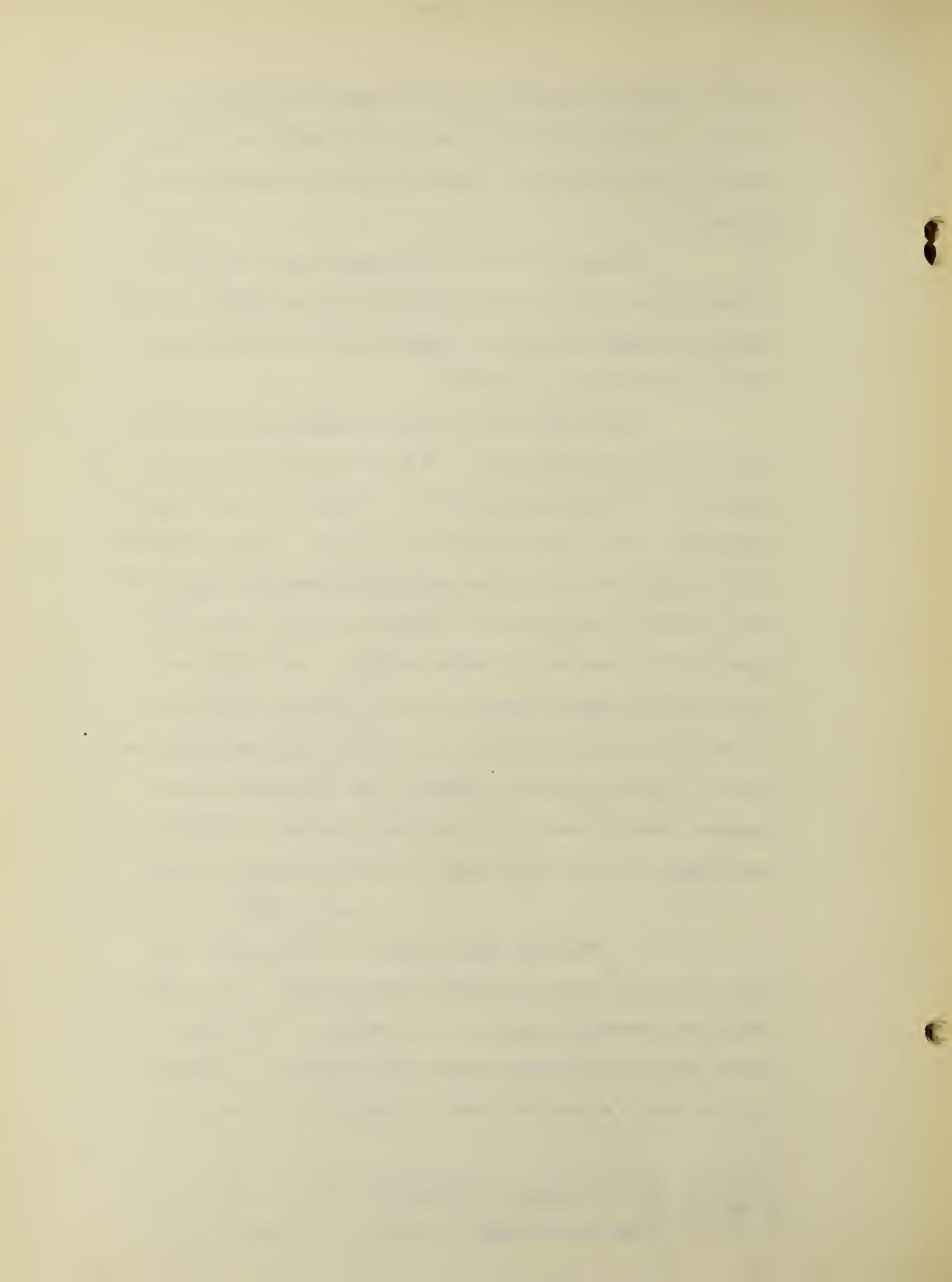
³
May 30, 1836.

. "The Davy Club got into a little trouble, the week before last, from the following circumstances: H. W. gave a lecture on Pyrotechny, prepared in the vacation. As you may imagine there was some slight noise on the occasion. In fact, the noise was so slight that Tutor B. heard it at his room in

1. Emerson, E. W., Thoreau as Remembered (p. 16)

2. Ibid (p. 18)

3. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (pp. 55-56) 4. Ibid, (p. 51)



Holworthy. This worthy boldly determined to march forth and attack the rioters. Accordingly, in the midst of a grand display of rockets, etc., he stepped into the room, and, having gazed around him in silent astonishment for the space of two minutes, and hearing various cries of 'Intrusion!' 'Throw him over!' 'Saw his leg off!' 'Pull his wool!' etc., he made two or three dignified motions with his hand to gain attention, and then kindly advised us 'to retire to our respective rooms'. Strange to say, he found no one inclined to follow this good advice, and he accordingly thought fit to withdraw. There is, as perhaps you know, a law against keeping powder in the college buildings. The effect of Tutor B.'s intrusion was evident on the next Monday night, when H. W. and B. were invited to call and see President Quincy; and owing to the tough reasoning of Tutor B., who boldly asserted that 'powder was powder' they were presented each with a public admonition."

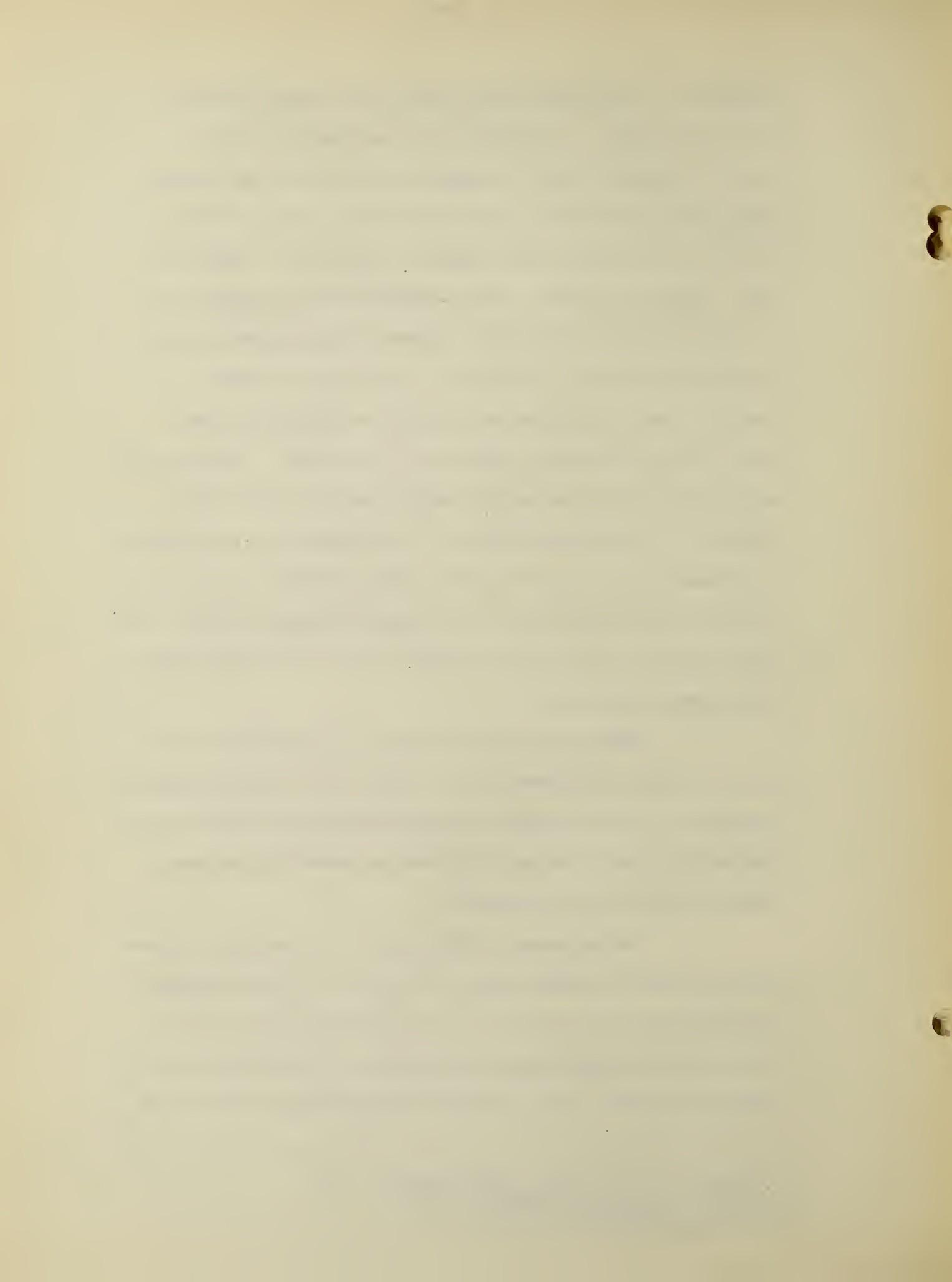
Thoreau's own estimation of what college did for him in a letter of 1843¹ was that it taught him "to express himself"-- probably as I have suggested from the opportunity for wider reading than in the actual classroom work where he seems to have been a student little above the average.²

He graduated in 1837 and it is to the point to note that the Thoreau of twenty years in his part at Harvard Commencement idealized the very sort of life he was afterwards to lead. He was one of two graduates chosen to hold a "conference" on the Commercial Spirit.³ His opponent in the debate was Henry Vose of

1. Quoted in Salt, Life of Henry Thoreau (p. 22)

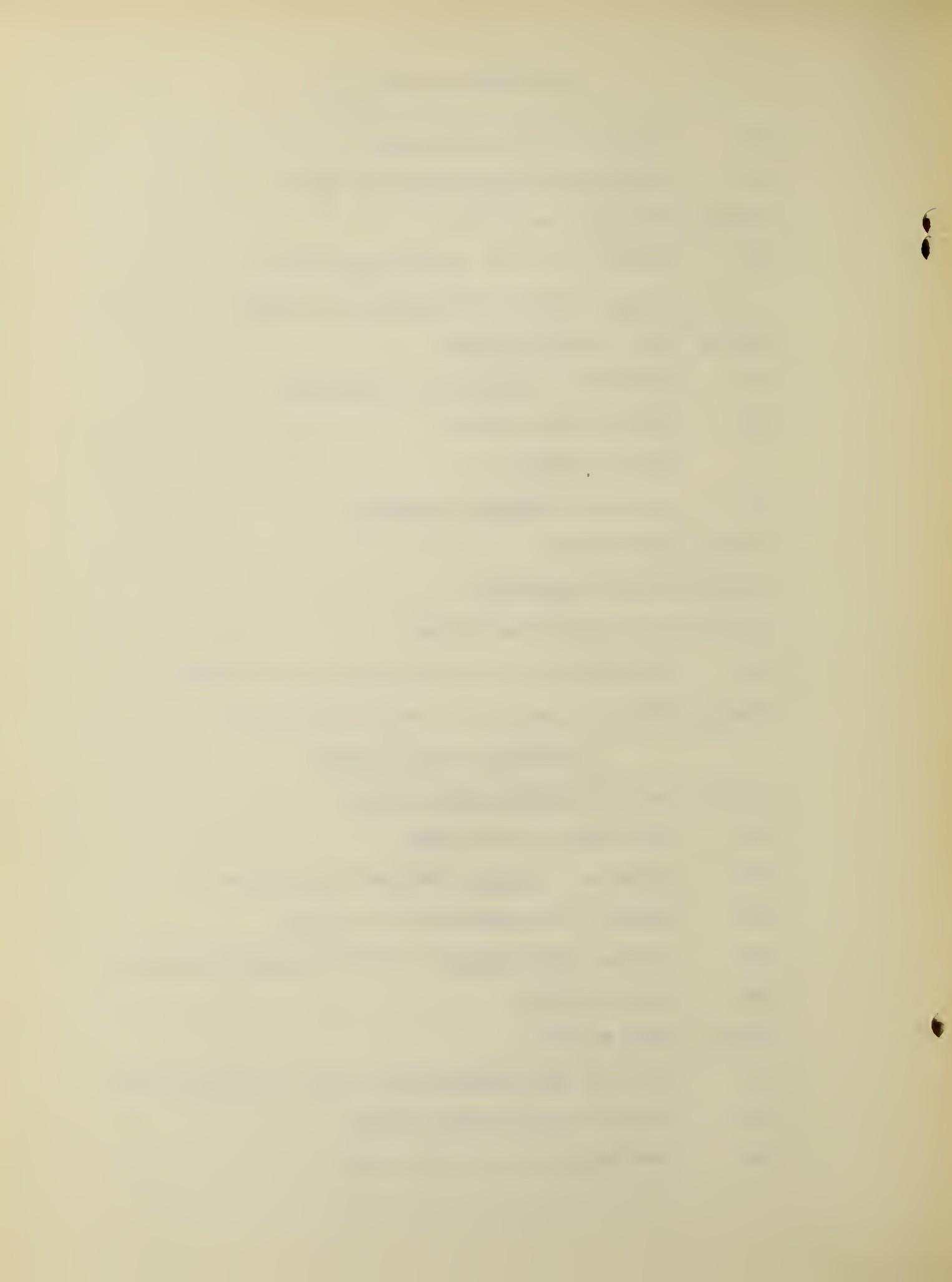
2. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (p. 51)

3. Ibid (pp. 18-19)



Chronological Table No. 2

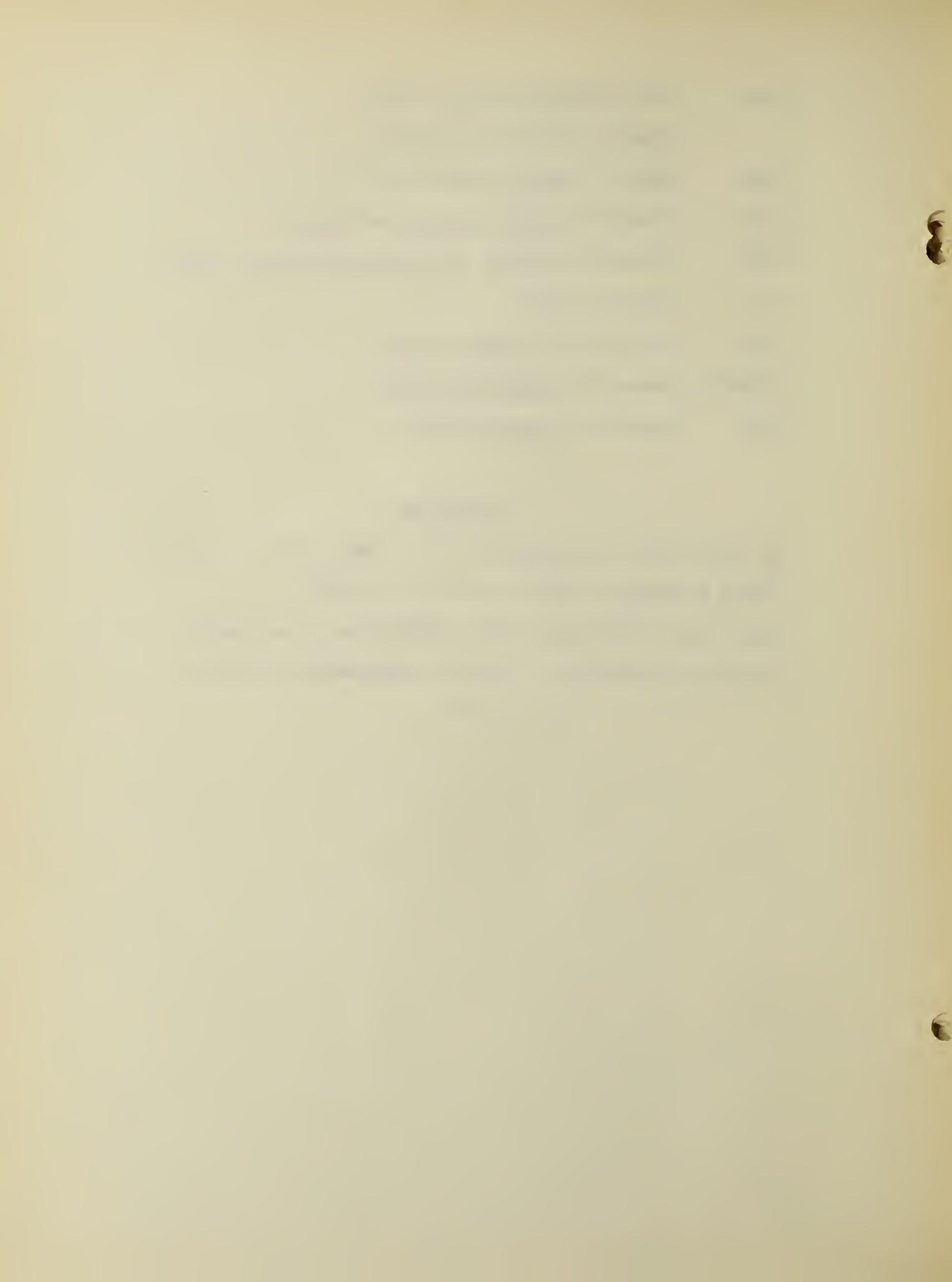
- 1760 Rousseau's La Nouvelle Heloise
1762 Rousseau's Du Contrat Social and Emile
1789-1799 The French Revolution
1798 Schlegels found the German Romantic School
Lyrical Ballads of Wordsworth and Coleridge
1809-1818 Byron's Childe Harolde
1807 Wordsworth's Intimations of Immortality
1810 Scott's Waverly Novels
Shelley's Alastor
1817 Coleridge's Biographia Literarii
1817-1820 Keat's poems
1818-1820 Shelley's Prometheus
1820-1824 Everett at Harvard College
1821 First Collection of William Cullen Bryant's Poems
1824-1827 Carlyle: Translations of Goethe, Schiller and
Specimens of German Romance
1824-1846 Landor's Imaginary Conversations
1827 First Volume of Poe's Poems
1830 Victor Hugo's Hernani; Tennyson's first poems
1832 Goethe: first complete edition of Faust
1833 Carlyle: Sartor Resartus; Heine: Die Romantische Schule
1836 Emerson's Nature
1836-1865 Dickens' Novels
1837 Whittier's Anti Slavery Poems; Emerson's American Scholar
1838 Emerson's Divinity School Address
1839 First Collection Longfellow's Poems



- 1841 First Collection Lowell's Poems
Emerson's Essays: First Series
- 1844 Emerson's Essays: Second Series
- 1845 Browning's Dramatic Romances and Lyrics
- 1849 Thoreau's A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers
- 1854 Thoreau's Walden
- 1855 Walt Whitman: Leaves of Grass
- 1859-1888 Tennyson's Idylls of the King
- 1883 Stevenson's Treasure Island

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(pp. 655-691).



Concord, in later years a Massachusetts judge. An extract from Thoreau's speech is of significance:¹

"Let men true to their natures cultivate the moral affections, lead manly and independent lives. The order of things should be somewhat reversed. The seventh should be man's day of toil, wherein to earn his living by the sweat of his brow; and the other six his Sabbath of the affections and the soul,- in which to range this widespread garden, and drink in the soft influence and sublime revelations of Nature."

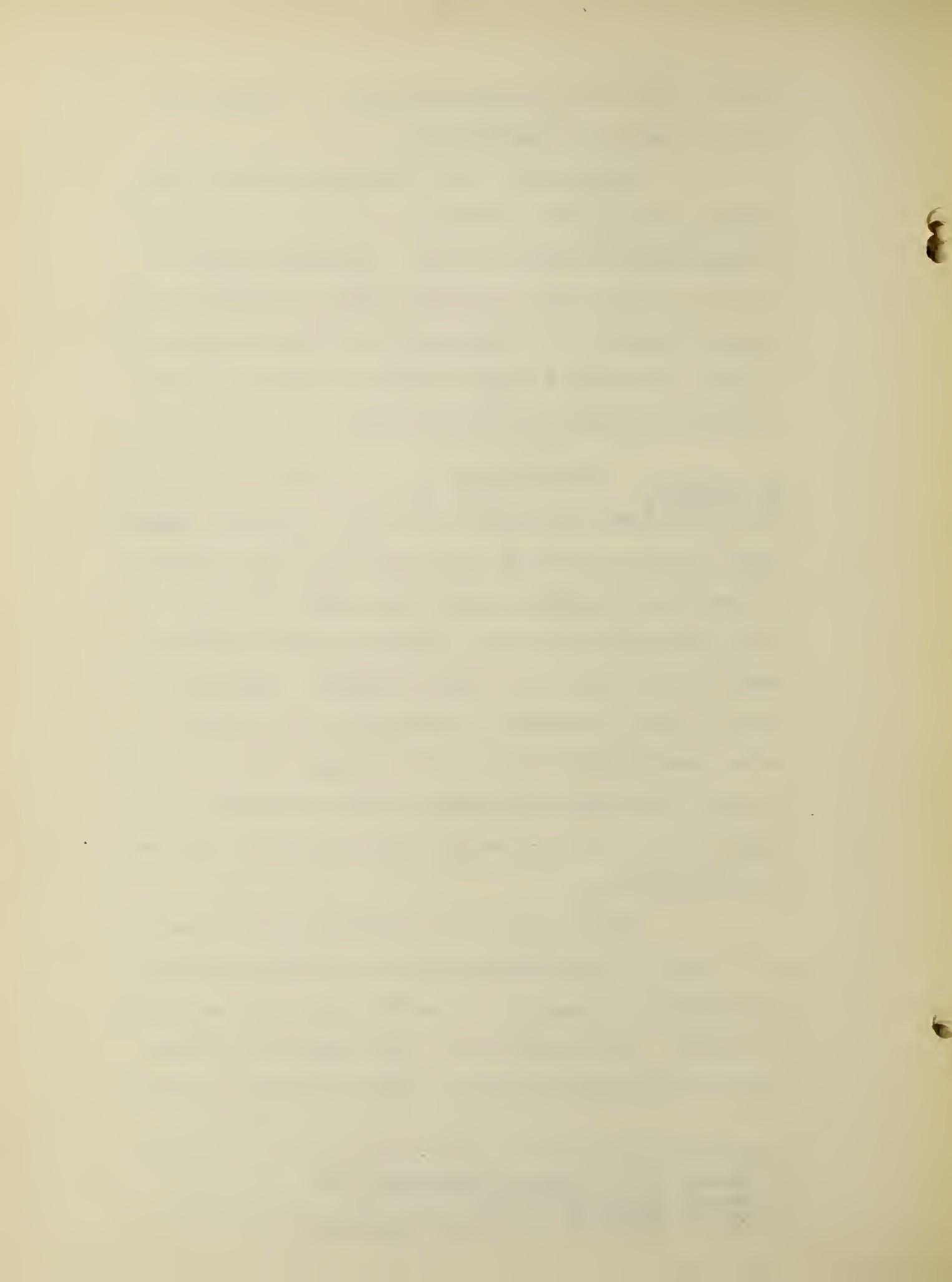
The Influence of Rousseauism. With the "expectancy of the land" in the hearts of native and immigrant, attainment of political freedom and a growing sense of Nationalism which we have indicated filled the country in the period from 1800-1850, and with the progress of education which included European current literature and translations,² the Romantic Movement found fertile soil in America. Emerson and Thoreau lived at the height of its expression in the nineteenth century, were affected by its preliminary trends, and in turn gave it some of its greatest significance by their own writings. Any survey of their works or lives must necessarily include an account of their relation to it.

The eighteenth century had been an age of prose and of reason, of transition and evolution of European life since the Renaissance.³ Preeminently it was the age of logic and monarchical theory. The French Revolution broke down lines of scholasticism and aristocracy which had been drawn too strictly, and with

1. Emerson, E. W., Thoreau as Remembered (p. 19)

2. Mumford, Golden Day (p. 33)

3. Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (p. 13)

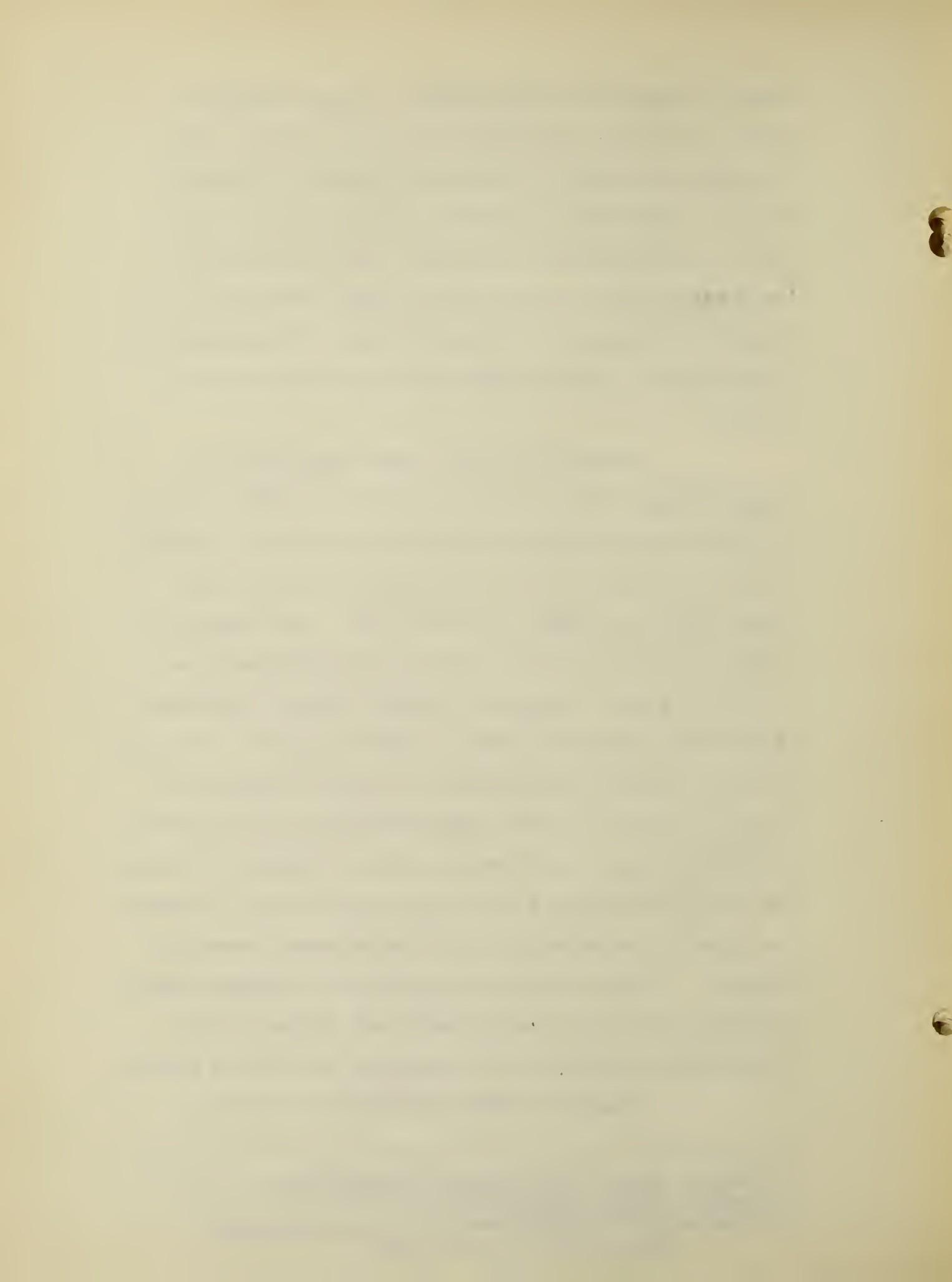


them, the deification of the intellect. It was necessary to find a new touchstone for truth, and that was not far to seek in the Rousseauism which had animated the Revolution - the belief that Man's imagination, his practical and moral natures play a part in his apprehension of the truth.¹ With the conviction that man had been born free and that he was everywhere in chains,² the thinkers of the nineteenth century set themselves ostentatiously to rending those chains and in getting back to Nature.

Rousseau's best known works were Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse, written in 1760, in which he pleaded for the sentiment and sentimentality which his age had spurned, demanding nature and natural love with a very passion of eloquence, - Du Contrat Social, and Emile, published in 1762. The Contract presented the idea that the only natural and right government was that of the people. Emile was a treatise on education with the same skilfully imaginative refrain, "Trust to Nature."³ His books had caught together the tangled webs of hitherto inexpressible discontent against the court, privileged orders, and the intellectualism of his day, and had woven them into a program of rebellion. Now with actual barriers removed, French culture turned to Rousseau for a plan of reconstruction, and his works became increasingly saleable. Through disciples his ideas spread to Germany, England, Scandinavia, and Russia, crystallizing forms of the incipient intellectual revolutions in these countries, and thence to America.

Rousseau's fundamental statement had been his

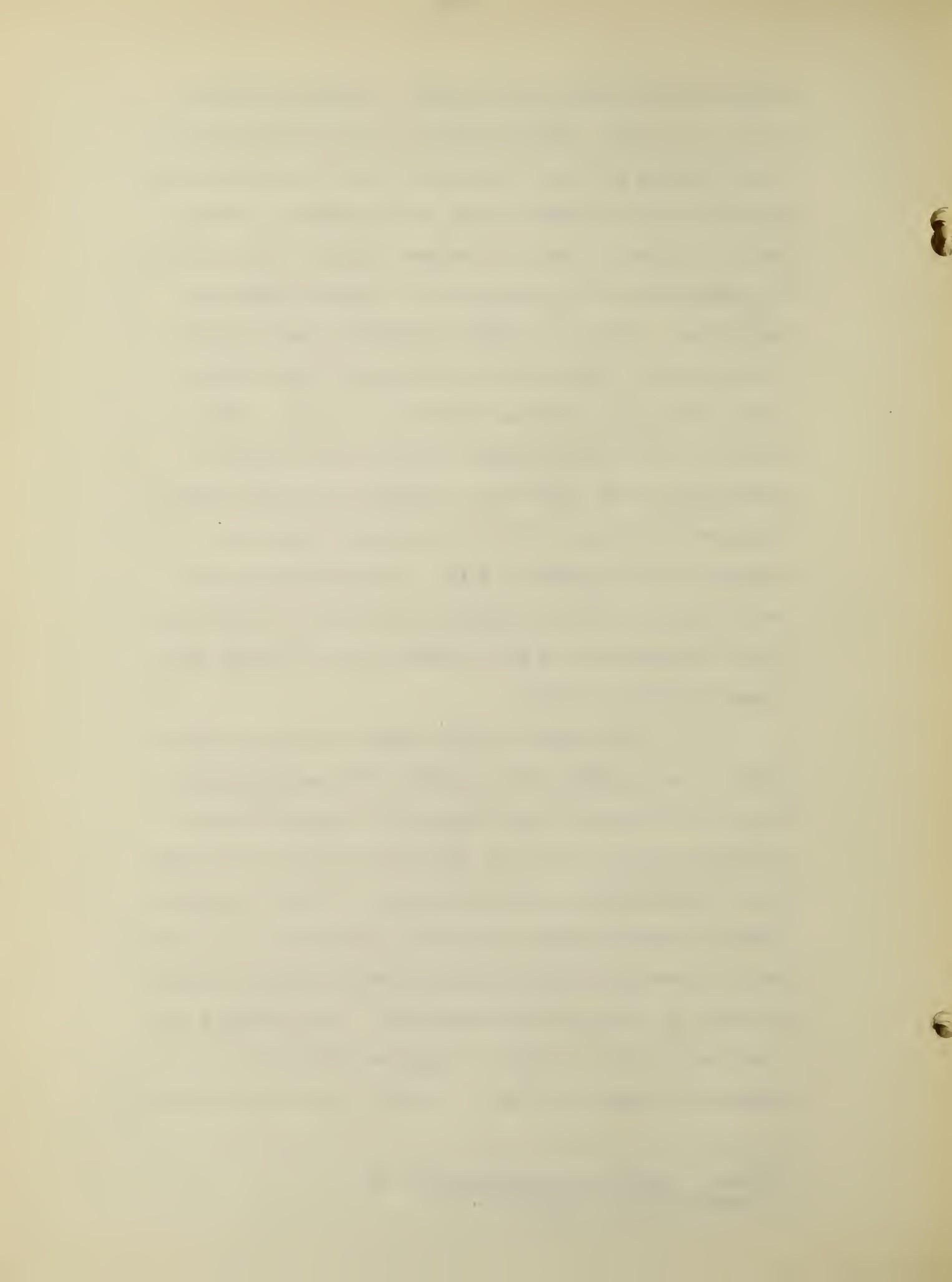
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1. Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (p. 17)
 2. Rousseau, Social Contract (p. 1)
 3. Translation of the three books and The New International Encyclopedia (vol. 20, p. 184)



contrast between nature and convention.¹ Society, according to him, is a mutual agreement among men to preserve the freedom of all, whereby each member gives over his individual sovereignty and receives back an equal portion of the common will through which he becomes as free as he had been before.² This collective sovereign power is the only real one. All other powers are usurpations. There is no need to protect the people against this common sovereignty since it is made up of each of their wills, and the people will do themselves no injury. Modern society is a force of artificial constraints not a rule by aristocrats, but by classicists, and humanists, who make their conventions of religion, education, and social intercourse - a tyranny of the intellect of a few. Let each man break with this restraint of habit, recognize his own power of innate goodness, and exercise his right of freedom to the reconstruction of a once more Natural Society.

This scheme of things gave new life to a culture which had been paralyzed with teachings of the religious dread that men were naturally sinful and worthy of salvation only if they should earnestly strive to follow God's laws as interpreted, not by their intuition, but by the reason of a group of ecclesiastics; to classes numbed by heavy taxes, confiscation of property, fear of imprisonment and living torture should they not live as the reason of the King's Court prescribed. The individual felt a new lease of life. He was no longer one of the mob, but a personality of untold resource - a genius. According to Rousseau

1. Babbit, Rousseau and Romanticism (p. 45)
2. Rousseau, Social Contract (p. 113)



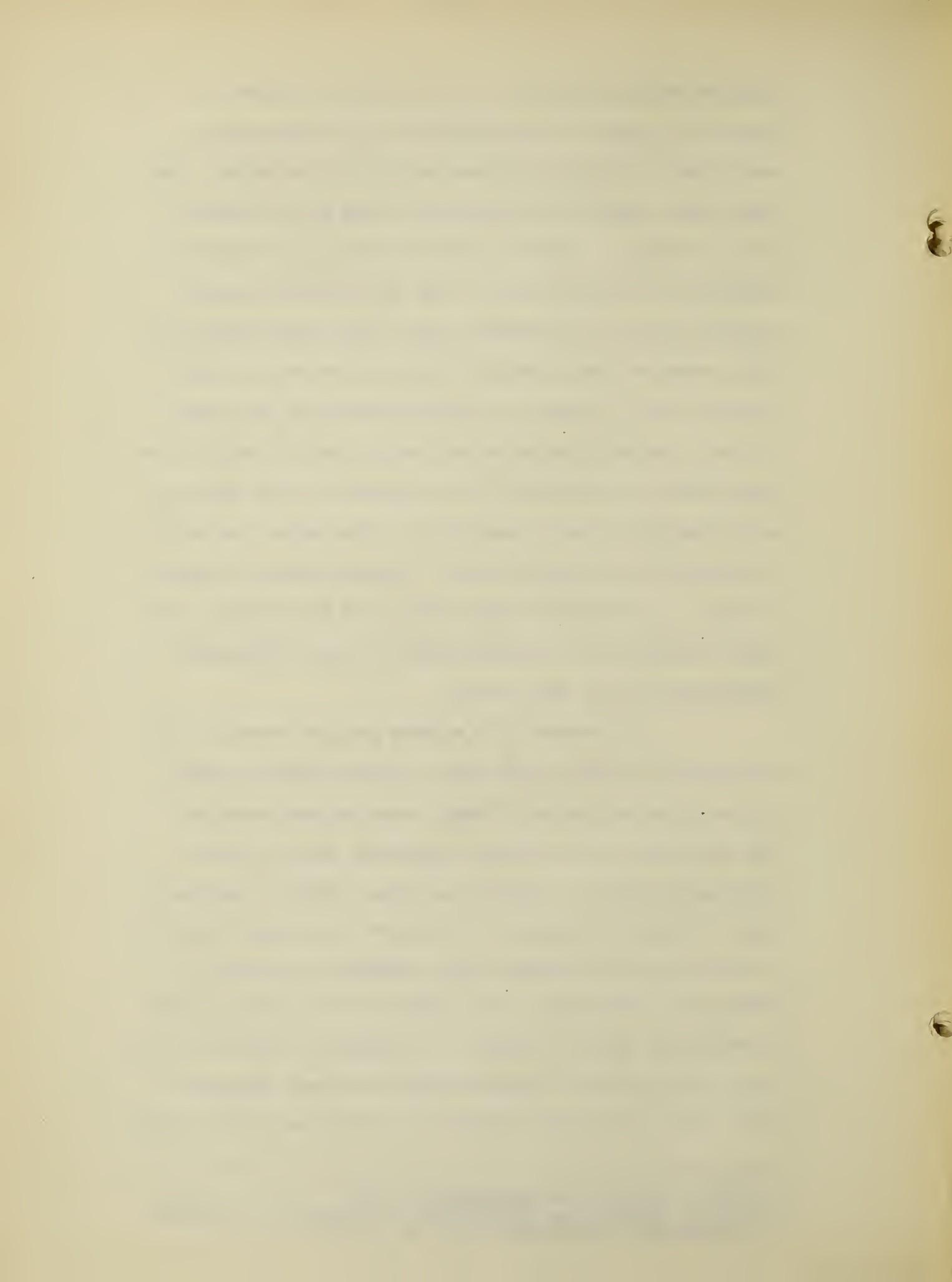
the prime mark of genius was that it refused to imitate a pattern, but strove to express its own ego, to emancipate a temperamental self which had been artificially restrained. The result was a hysteria of individualism among men of newly-discovered "genius". Artists adorned themselves with frightful moustaches or enormous beards. They wore long hair, smoked continual cigars, and ornamented their studios with human skulls, foils, mandolins, and helmets, hinting dark secrecy and danger in studio life - in short, to quote Chateaubriand, they aimed "to form a separate species between the ape and the satyr".¹ One specialized and experimented in the niceties of one's emotions or the shadings in one's sensations in a bewildering confusion of introspection and extroversion. It was the age of Greenwich villages. Individualism became unidealized into egoism. The negative resolve not to imitate became a positive adolescent exclamation point of being unique.

But beneath this surface foam grew steadily the new impulse of personal worth which, striking deeper currents, gave to literature Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Hugo and Dumas in France; Burns, Wordsworth, Scott, Carlyle, Coleridge and Keats in England; and Goethe, Schiller, Schlegel, Uhland and Heine in Germany.² For sources the scholar turned to a study of earlier literature, more primitive religion and philosophy - Shakespeare, Celtic stories and Norse sagas, Greek philosophy and Eastern religions.³ The Romantic imagination failing to find the world of people-as-they-are always sympathetic, and so feeling an intense loneliness in society was prone to take

1. Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism (p. 45)

2. Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism, Bibliography (pp. 399-419)

3. International Encyclopedia (vol. 20, p. 115)



refuge in a land of chimeras all its own, a flight from reality in which was confined a "natural" world of such freedom and personality as never could have existed.¹ A passage from Rousseau's letter to the Bailli de Mirabeau will illustrate this tendency:²

January 31, 1761.

..... This idle and contemplative life which you do not approve and which I do not excuse, becomes to me daily more delicious; to wander alone endlessly and ceaselessly among the trees and rocks about my dwelling, to muse or rather to be irresponsible as I please, and as you say to go wool-gathering; finally to give myself up unconstrainedly to my fantasies, which, thank heavens, are all within my power: that, sir, is for me the supreme enjoyment."

In Romantic religion there was no gulf between the human and divine natures. Man had only to look within to his true self; Nature without completed the link, and the symbolic impression of Nature upon Man's soul put him in Communion with God.³ Sympathy is for Rousseau the chief of human virtues, sympathy which leads in action to altruism, and in society to the brotherhood of man.

The system of Rousseau's ideal education is expressed in Emile: the child's nature is complete in itself.⁴ Emile "follows no formula, yields neither to authority nor to example and neither acts nor speaks save as it seems best to him". "Keep the child dependent on things alone, and you will have followed the

1. Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism (pp. 74-75)

2. Ibid (p. 75)

3. Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism (pp. 121-122)

4. Rousseau. Emile (p. 141)

5. Ibid, (p. 145)

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order of nature in his education."¹ He is "to bow his neck beneath the hard yoke of physical necessity"², and so learn the fundamental laws of Nature by direct contact with her.

There is no indication in any of Emerson's writings or journals that he was ever influenced directly by an interest in Rousseau. Emerson's contact with Rousseau's Romantic culture in Europe came most directly from his Harvard classes with Edward Everett who had travelled and studied in Europe for five years (1815-1819) while the movement was gathering momentum, taking his Ph. D. at the University of Gottingen³ where he must certainly have absorbed a great deal of German Romanticism, and he is said to have quoted many English poets of that day in his class room.⁴ I have spoken above of Emerson's admiration for Everett. Channing, Professor of Rhetoric at Harvard, brother of William Ellery Channing, was also greatly interested in the English Romantic Movement, and no doubt he, too, inspired his pupils to read Coleridge and Wordsworth. Coleridge is often quoted in Emerson's Harvard Journals, and later when he goes to England himself in 1833, his diary reads:

"Liverpool, Sept. 1, 1833

God has shown me the men I wished to see, - Landor, Coleridge, Carlyle, Wordsworth--- Many things I owe to these men."⁵

So it is that in Emerson's philosophy we find traces of Rousseauism, reinforced by Unitarianism and Transcendentalism: his trust in intuition, the intrinsic worth of the individ-

1. Rousseau, Emile (p. 70)

2. Ibid, (p. 71)

3. Houghton Mifflin, American Classics (p. 232)

4. Emerson, R. W., Life and Letters in New England

5. Emerson, Journal of 1833

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ual, and the sense of communion with the Divine through the symbolism of Nature which he makes the keynote of his first book of essays, Nature, in 1836. ("In the woods is perpetual youth. We return to reason and faith; all mean egoism vanishes. . . . The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me.")¹

We find traces of the Romantic escape into Chimera-land in Emerson's college journals, one of which he dedicates to the Gnomes.² Another is called The Wide World.³ In a January entry he dreams: "with Indians enchanters I send my soul up to wander among the stars till 'the twilight of the Gods'". Again, the same year, on March 11, he writes: "I would plunge into the classic lore of chivalrous story and of the fairy-land bards, and inclosing the ponderous volumes of the firmest believers in magic and in the firmest potency of consecrated crosier or elfin ring, I would let my soul sail away into their wildest phantasies."

In his more mature writings we find little of this unless we except the wealth of mythical allusion in his essays and such poems as Uriel or Merlin, both written in 1846.

The Romantic sense of loneliness, too, was in Emerson and its corresponding appeal to nature for solace and recreation. The conventions which were hollow to Rousseau were to Emerson standards whose worth was to be tested by the individual—not objects to be shied at or accepted because they were conventions.

1. Emerson, R. W., Nature (opening paragraph)

2. That of 1820.

3. 1821

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Thoreau's college days came in the period when Romanticism and Transcendentalism were beginning to find footholds in American thought. In Emerson's days they had been largely rumors. In the Abolitionist sentiment which had been influential in the Thoreau home since his boyhood, lay the seed of Rousseau's passion for freedom. Channing's classes likewise had their influence on Thoreau's reading.¹ In his freshman year Carlyle's Sartor Resartus was published and probably was one of the recommended new books. In the beginning of Thoreau's senior year Emerson's Nature was published which Dr. Hedge calls "the first document of the remarkable outburst of Romanticism on Puritan ground".²

Thoreau's Commencement address (the essence of which I have quoted above) shows the influence of Romantic thought.

In the summer of the year after his graduation he must have read Emerson's Phi Beta Kappa address, The American Scholar, the so called "intellectual Declaration of Independence for America".³ ("In yourself is the law of nature, the whole of wisdom.")⁴ In the same year Carlyle's French Revolution came off the press in England.⁵

So far as the influence of Romanticism goes, Thoreau's ideas are practically those of Emerson - the major premises of the Transcendentalist movement - faith in the worth of man's intuition, as a criterion of Truth and communion with God through nature. Examples of these premises in Thoreau's

1. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau(p. 51)

2. Quoted in Cabot, Memoirs of Ralph W. Emerson (p. 244)

3. O. W. Holmes, quoted in Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (p. 29)

4. Emerson, R. W., The American Scholar

5. International Encyclopedia

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writings are: "The faintest assured objection which one healthy man feels will at length prevail over the arguments and customs of mankind."¹ "All good things are wild and free."² "In society you will not find health, but in Nature." "Society is always diseased, and the best is the most so." "The doctrines of despair, of spiritual or political tyranny or servitude were never taught by such as shared the serenity of Nature." "We are older by faith than by experience."³ And in his journal for September 7, 1851: "My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in Nature, -to attend all the oratorios, the operas, in Nature."⁴

Thoreau does not need a world of chimeras, he takes refuge in nature and in his interest in Natural History.

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1. Thoreau, Walden, (p. 227)
 2. Thoreau, Excursions
 3. Thoreau, Paradise to be Regained from Anti Slavery and Reform Papers.
 4. Shepard, Editor, Heart of Thoreau's Journals (p. 87)

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Chronological Table No. 3

- 1787 King's Chapel, Boston, becomes Unitarian
- 1805 Henry Ware, Unitarian, becomes Professor of
Theology at Harvard
The Monthly Anthology published
- 1819 W. E. Channing's Baltimore Sermon
- 1829-1832 Emerson pastor at the Second Church, Boston
- 1830-1850 Most vigorous years of Transcendentalism
- 1832 Emerson resigns his pulpit
- 1833 Andrews Norton publishes Statement of Reasons for
not Believing the Doctrine of the Trinitarians
Concerning the Nature of God and the Person of
Christ
- 1836-1860 Fifteen years of controversy
- 1838 Emerson's Divinity School Address
- 1841 Theodore Parker preaches on The Transient and the
Permanent in Christianity
W. E. Channing writes: "I am little of a Unitarian,
have little sympathy with the system of Priestley
and Belsham and stand aloof from all but those
who strive and pray for a clearer light."
- 1842-1844 The Dial Ethnical Scriptures
- 1846 Theodore Parker is excluded from the Unitarian Church
- 1860-1882 Reconstruction of Unitarianism under Henry W. Bellows

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27-29, 20, 31, 66-71)

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International Encyclopedia

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The Influence
of Calvinism,
Unitarianism,
and Liberalism. The Religion of Emerson's and Thoreau's time was, as we might expect from the social trends hinted at, in a state of transition.

Taken purely as a matter of psychology, the intense fervor of Puritanism which inspired the early colonists could not last indefinitely. Through the greater part of the eighteenth century, political and commercial affairs in the region around Boston occupied the attention of the greater number of people, preventing them from any exclusive absorption in religion.¹ Echoes of eighteenth century English radicalism and Methodism began to penetrate to the colonies. Arminianism appeared in Massachusetts² with its protest against the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination, and its idea that a man could prevent or aid by his attitude the operation of Divine Grace.³ Not long afterwards came Arianism with its assertion that Christ was not of the same essence as God, the Father, but was the first and highest of His creatures.⁴ Then on the other side arrived Jonathan Edwards in 1731 with his eloquent revival sermons to split the Congregational religious factions nicely in half. His converts were called New Calvinists, who went on to develop the orthodox contribution of American theology to the age of Reason. On the other hand the Liberal School were startled into comparative solidarity by the excesses of Calvinistic revivals, and called themselves Unitarians,⁵ although they had very little direct connection with

1. Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (p. 19)

2. Ibid (p. 20)

3. New International Encyclopedia (vol. 2, p. 146)

4. Ibid (vol. 1, p. 114)

5. Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (p. 21)

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English Unitarianism organized by Joseph Priestley. The name covered rather the whole early movement of release from New England religious tradition.¹ Typical of the critical age of Reason in which it received its impetus, it was in its beginnings more negatively Calvinistic than positively any creed, and heavy with rationalism. Its leaders, Henry Ware, William Ellery Channing, and later Theodore Parker, had some knowledge of the creeds which we know as Unitarianism,- that God is a single undivided personality and the core of all religion is a communion of the Human Soul with God and the life of God within the spirit of man; that Religion is thus an experience of the inner life to which all forms and creeds are of secondary importance; that the church and Bible are outer expressions of inner reality, neither of which have any authority over the human mind; that Jesus was an example of manhood in fullest communion with God, and therefore a human life through whom we can study an ideal expression of God's spirit.² But to the followers to whom their eloquence and earnestness appealed, Unitarianism was first of all a revolt from religious restriction - and secondarily free religious life for the Spirit, together with a new kind of intolerance - for Calvinism. It was natural that out of such an attitude should grow up forms which, once the first impetuosity of freedom had lost its significance through several generations of followers, grew irksome and well nigh as meaningless as the old precisions of orthodoxy.

In 1805 Henry Ware, Unitarian minister, was made

1. Cabot, Memoir of Ralph W. Emerson (vol. 1, p. 22)
2. New International Encyclopedia (vol. 22, p. 657)

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Professor of Theology at Harvard, and a great wave of influential liberalism went out from his classes.¹ Edward Everett graduated from Harvard in these days as did Joseph Stevens Buckminster, a prominent Boston preacher in the time of Emerson and Thoreau.

In 1819 Dr. William E. Channing preached his famous Baltimore Sermon which contrasted Unitarianism with Calvinism clearly, and destructively for the latter. The sermon swept the country in editorials and pamphlets. Within a year one hundred and fifty New England Congregational Churches had declared themselves Unitarian, and all the churches in Boston with the exception of one.²

To come more closely to Concord Unitarianism - Emerson's father was a Unitarian minister of decidedly liberal views.³ An influence for liberalism in that time was a magazine called The Monthly Anthology which had been started by a young Harvard graduate, probably fired with enthusiasm for Henry Ware, dedicated to the service of literature and general culture, and using a good many of its columns for purposes of open theological discussions. When this original editor was ready to give the paper up after a year's publication, William Emerson took it over and with a group of friends continued it through ten volumes.³

Waldo Emerson's Aunt Mary had the reputation for wishing everyone to be a Calvinist but herself,⁴ but her philosophy was certainly too liberal for the effectiveness of her

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1. Allen, Liberal Movement in Theology (p. 75)
 2. New International Encyclopedia (vol. 22, p. 657)
 3. Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (p. 23)
 4. Emerson, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (p. 23)

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influence as an upholder of orthodoxy. We may be sure her nephew was not a convert to Puritanism under her guidance.

Dr. Ripley was the Concord shepherd of the orthodox, but dearly as Emerson and most of his congregation loved the old man, the young people and many of the older had little real sympathy with his religious beliefs.

In college Emerson idolized Edward Everett who had graduated from Harvard in the days of Henry Ware's professorship there. From his natural interest in morality and ethics as well as his slowly forming conviction that he was destined for the ministry, he must have been keenly interested in the Baltimore Sermon preached while he was a junior at Harvard. Mentions of admiration for Channing are scattered throughout his college journals. In his senior year we find Emerson finally dedicating himself, in a journal entry of self analysis,¹ completely to the Unitarian Church. In his following four years at Harvard Divinity School he was influenced in some measure by Dr. Nathaniel Frothingham's sermons² which made his listeners acquainted with Eichhom (the German historian, theologian, and orientalist who developed modern ideas concerning the origin of the Bible)³ and Professor Andrews Norton, Lecturer on Interpretation of the Bible, gave form and method to like studies.⁴ His journals of the period mention Dr. Channing's sermons, the central themes of which were ever the dignity of Human Nature and the sacredness of Conscience.⁵

1. April 18, 1824.

2. Emerson, R. W., Life and Letters in New England from Social Aims

3. New International Encyclopedia (vol. 7, p. 550)

4. Emerson, R. W., Life and Letters in New England

5. Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (p. 25)

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In the autumn of 1828 in spite of an incomplete training at the School of Divinity owing to years of broken health, he was offered the pulpit of the Second Church, one of the most important in Boston, as colleague to the minister, Henry Ware.¹ The following year Dr. Ware's health broke down, and Emerson took his place.² He was aware of the increasing apathy which, because of the growing formalism, was creeping into the Unitarian Churches, and he did not care for the standard degree of devotional fervor in his church; still he believed he had a message for a congregation, which might transcend all this.³ His sermons, of which there are 171 in manuscript form, are original in no remarkable way. They are clear, earnest, and direct, but seem to presage nothing of the Address to Divinity Students a few years later.³

In 1832, however, the "ice-box of Unitarianism" as he was later to call it,⁴ proved too cramping for Emerson's growing spiritual convictions. There was no incompatibility in his resignation; there is a quiet, tolerant, kindly letter of farewell to his parish which refuses to see in the incident any breach of friendliness. The whole occasion was Emerson's individual decision that for him at any rate the Lord's Supper was not meant for a permanent institution, and that he could not conduct the symbolic service of commemoration with sincerity.⁵ Of his people he wrote, "I cannot go habitually to an institution which they esteem holiest with indifference or dislike."⁵ His address of September ninth in which he announced his resignation, explains

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1. Garnett, Life of Emerson, Intro. Representative Men (xxxlv)
 2. Ibid
 3. Garnett, Life of Emerson, Representative Men (p. 25)
 4. Journal of September 1845
 5. Garnett, Representative Men (p. 53)

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his attitude: "It is my desire to do nothing which I cannot do with my whole heart. Having said this, I have said all. I have no hostility to this institution, I am only stating my want of sympathy with it. I am content that it stand to the end of the world, if it please men and please Heaven, and I shall rejoice in all the good it produces."¹ Thus formally Emerson's connection with Unitarianism closed, but its influence with him, as we shall try to show in later paragraphs, was merely diverted into other channels of expression. The man who was not interested in the "Unitarian ice-box" had, later, as a trick of historic irony, probably more to do with some of the modern tendencies in Unitarianism than any one else. Especially is he acceptable to modern Unitarians as their philosopher, and undoubtedly he helped to turn the older formal rationalistic Unitarianism into its modern mystical channel.

In 1829 the Calvinistic divines made a schism in Dr. Ripley's parish and founded a separate church of Trinitarians. To this the Thoreaus seceded when Henry was nine years old,² though we are told the family were frequent members also in Dr. Ripley's congregation and Henry had the usual opportunities for formal spiritual training at both churches.³ A Calvinistic aunt is mentioned as among his early mentors.³

It is likely that Thoreau sometimes heard Emerson preach during the latter's period of service in his Boston church. The incident of Emerson's resignation from his pastorate may very well have interested the young Henry Thoreau who was to enter

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1. Garnett, Representative Men (p. 53)
 2. Sanborn, Henry D. Thoreau (p. 27)
 3. Emerson, E. W., Henry Thoreau (p. 117)

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Harvard the following year.

There is more than a suspicion of the unorthodoxy of Thoreau's religious ideas in his Commencement speech, and it is very probable that he was deeply stirred by reading Emerson's Divinity School Address July 15, 1838. ("The oracles of truth are guarded by one stern condition - an intuition." "Let us be a temple.")¹

Not many years later the village gossip recognized three churches in Concord: the orthodox, the Unitarian, and Thoreau's church of Sunday Walkers or the Walden Pond Association.² The following quotations will show Thoreau's attitude toward the established religions:

"Really there is no infidelity nowadays so great as that which prays and keeps the Sabbath, and rebuilds the churches. ---The church is a sort of hospital for men's souls and as full of quackery as the hospital for their bodies."

(Sunday) - A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers

"A Temple, you know, was anciently 'an open place without a roof' where walls served merely to shut out the world and direct the mind toward heaven. But a modern meeting house shuts out the heavens, while it crowds the world into still closer quarters."

Letter to Harrison Blake

(Sanborn, Familiar Letters of Henry D. Thoreau)

"The best scripture, after all, records but a meagre faith. Its saints live reserved and austere. Let a

1. Emerson, R. W., Divinity School Address in Conduct of Life
2. Thoreau's journal May 3, 1857

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brave, devout man spend the year in the woods of Maine or Labrador, and see if the Hebrew scriptures speak adequately to his condition and experience from the setting in of winter to the breaking up of ice."

A Winter Walk (Excursions).

"I do not prefer one religion or philosophy to another. I have no sympathy with the bigotry and ignorance which make transient and partial and puerile distinctions between one man's faith and another's - as Christian and Heathen. I pray to be delivered from narrowness, partiality, exaggeration, bigotry. To the philosopher all sects, all nations, are alike. I like Brahma, Hari, Buddha, the Great Spirit, as well as God."

Thoreau's Journal, January 1850 (p. 49, Shepard).

"Our religion is as unpublic and incommunicable as our poetical vein, and to be approached with as much love and tenderness."

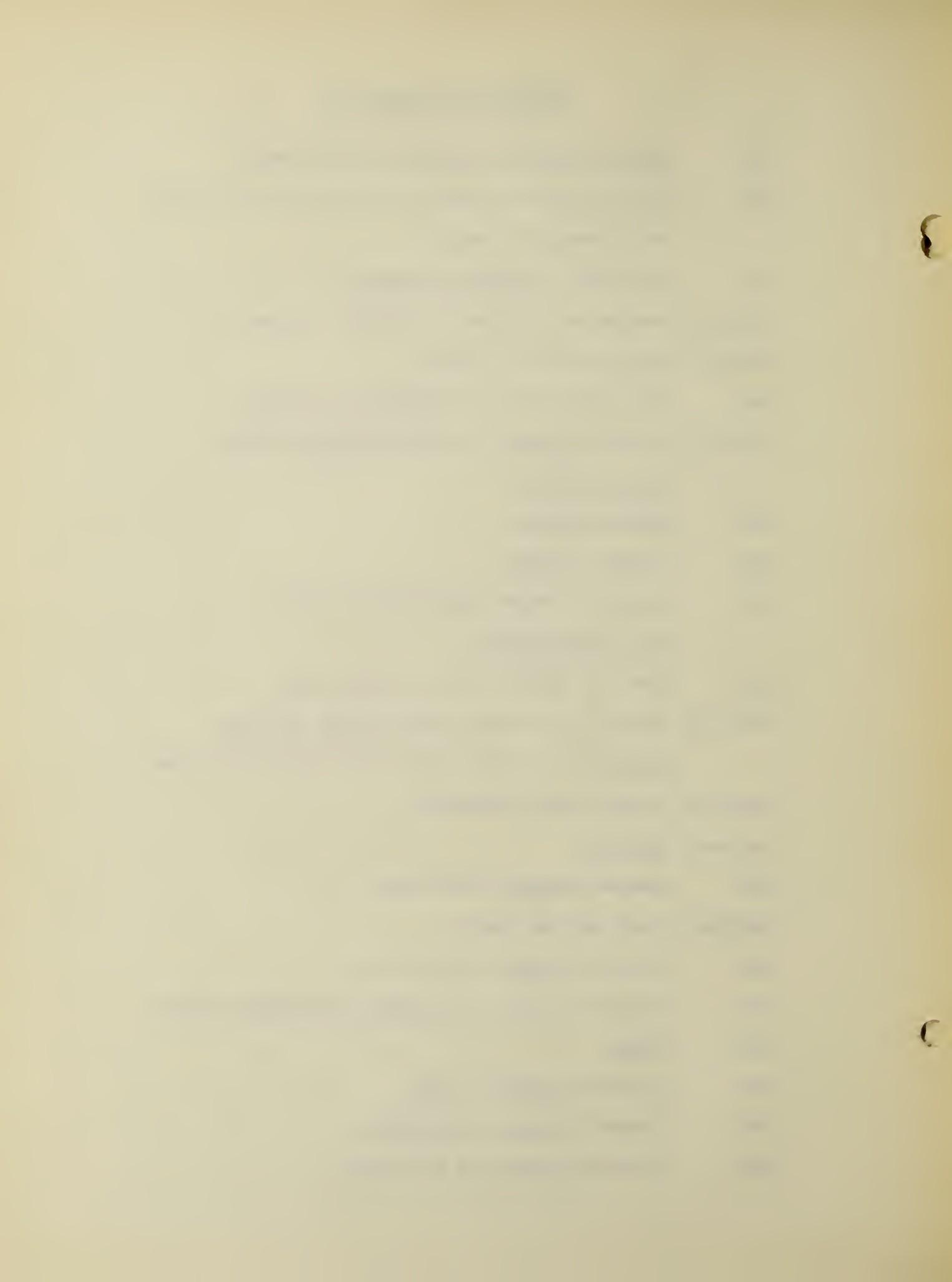
Thoreau's Journal, March 15, 1841 (p. 36, Shepard).

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Chronological Table No. 4

- 1798 Lyrical Ballads by Coleridge and Wordsworth
- 1804 Lecture on Kant in Paris, copies of Kant's original
works brought to America
- 1817 Coleridge's Biographia Literaria
- 1819-1822 Sermons and Lectures by William E. Channing
- 1820-1824 Edward Everett at Harvard
- 1823 Channing's lecture on Revelation and Nature
- 1828-1834 Carlyle's Signs of the Times, Goethe, Novalis
Characteristics
- 1833 Sartor Resartus
- 1836 Emerson's Nature
- 1837 Nucleus of Transcendentalist Club formed
The American Scholar
- 1838 Emerson's Address Before Divinity School
- 1838-1842 Webster and Brownson started Boston Quarterly
Review for the discussion of philosophical questions
- 1840-1841 Chardon Street Convention
- 1840-1844 The Dial
- 1841 Emerson's Essays, first series
- 1841-1847 Brook Farm Experiment
- 1844 Emerson's Essays, second series
- 1849 Thoreau's A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers
- 1854 Walden
- 1860 Emerson's Conduct of Life
- 1870 Emerson's Society and Solitude
- 1875 Emerson's Letters and Social Aims



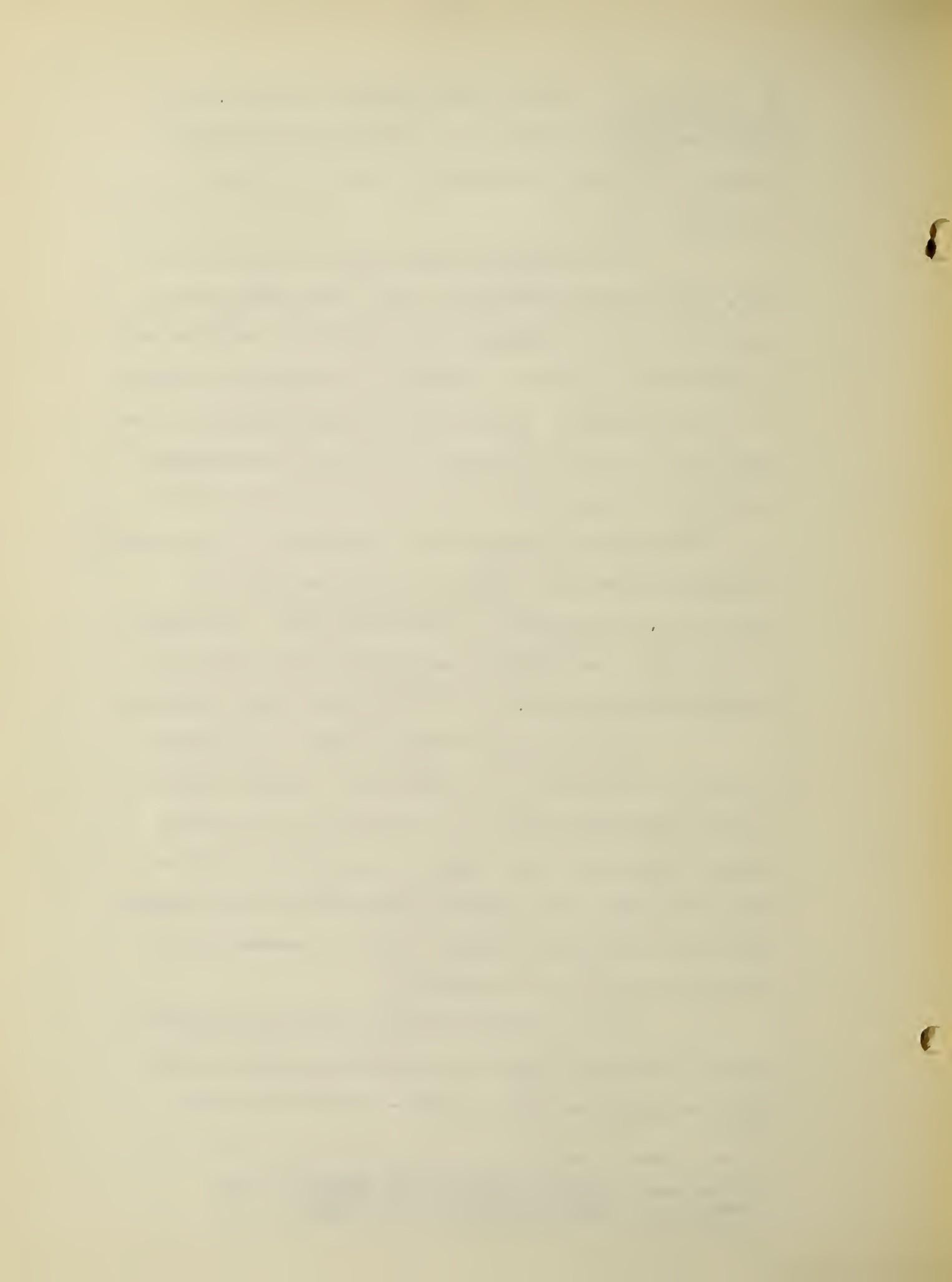
The Influence of Through liberal trends in Religion and the Transcendentalism. impressions of the Romantic Movement, Transcendentalism came to New England, influencing Emerson and Thoreau and in turn influenced by them.

Transcendentalism proper began in Germany, with Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* in 1781.¹ The German philosopher here used the term "transcendent" to designate qualities that lie outside of all experience - fundamental conceptions, universal and necessary categories which transcend any experience, but which impose conditions that make experience dependent upon knowledge - these were the primary laws of the mind, the ground of absolute truth. This idea was taken by Jacobi and expanded into the belief that humankind possessed a faculty of knowing truth by faith independently of the sensual or supersensual world.² This theory he illustrated by experiences of the spiritual life in Religion. So Transcendentalism was given its first impulse toward Mysticism.

Fichte presented to human thought the possibility that man can know nothing but his own ideas. He gives himself no concern about external things; it is sufficient to him that he endeavor to be, not to seem. From this inner world of his he apprehends reality not by knowledge, but by faith, "that voluntary repose in the ideas that naturally come to us, because through these only we can fulfill our destiny."³

Schelling takes the systems formulated so far and adds his own thought that the world outside is objective Reality. Thought and existence ideally are one - to the absolute mind.

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1. Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England (p. 15)
 2. Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England (p. 23)
 3. Ibid (p. 27)



For him the work of philosophy becomes twofold: to arrive at spirit from Nature; to arrive at Nature from Spirit.¹

Transcendentalism communicated to France chiefly through German literature, became engulfed in the sensational philosophy of the French Revolution, receiving its most adequate expression in Maine de Biran and Cousin.²

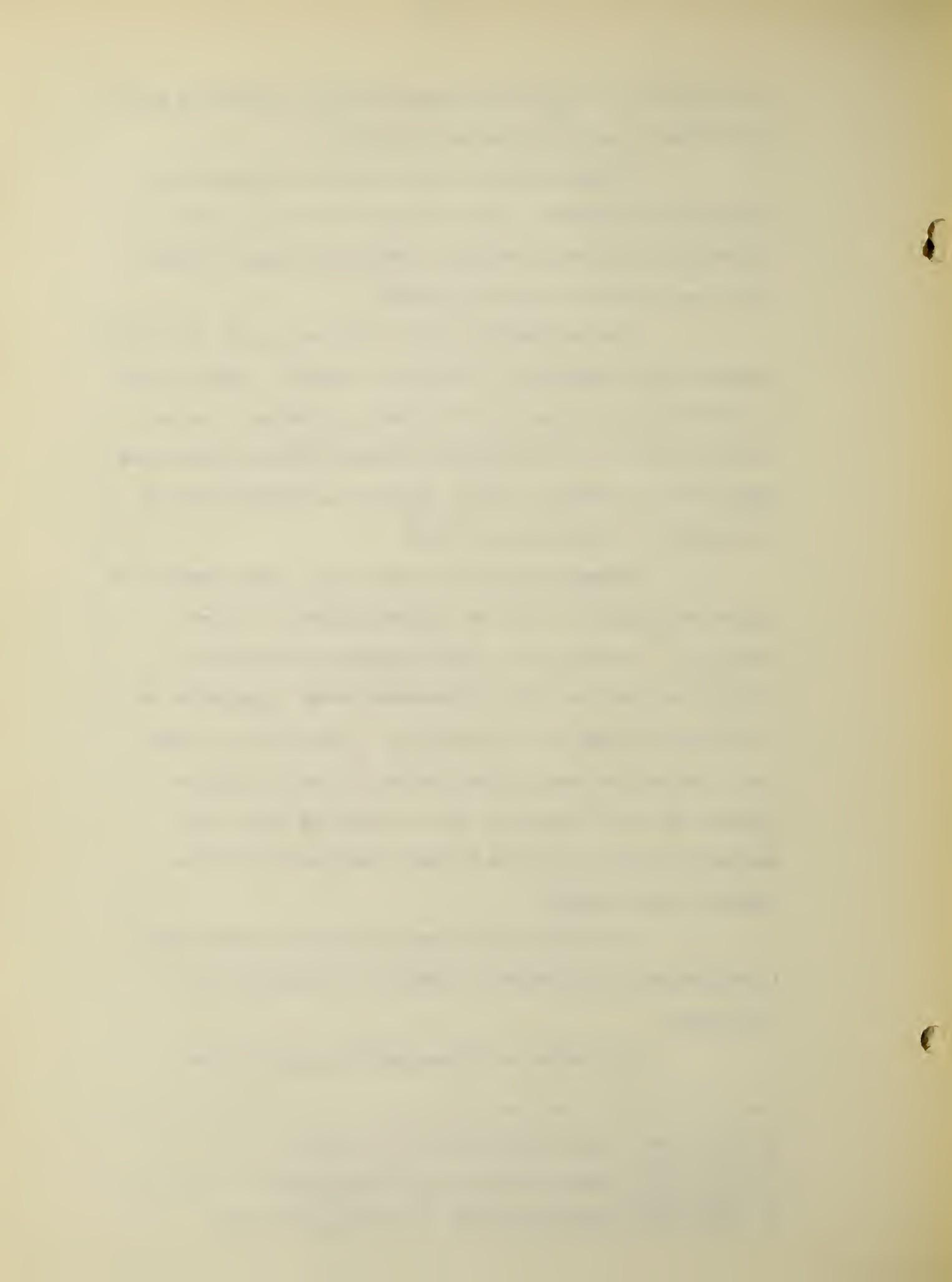
Transcendentalism came to England through Coleridge's interest in and translation of Schelling's works.² Carlyle proved an able second by translations from Goethe, Richter and Novalis.² Wordsworth added his enthusiasm for the whole German movement, and communicated it through a poetic, imaginative, interpretation of the impression it made upon his life.³

Transcendentalism took on a still newer form when it came to New England.⁴ Life here was still plastic, not yet stratified. In Europe the theories had been the study of a cultured few, but here they touched social life.⁴ Individual desire for freedom was ripe for its reception. It was for this reason that it worked out later in practical and impractical reforms. Puritans had been idealists in the very force of their revolt against Catholicism which was to them a materialistic system dependent upon ceremony.⁵

Unitarianism which had satisfied the first tide of liberalism had proved Lockean - looking for knowledge not for inspiration.

Literature of Transcendentalism came into New

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1. Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England (p. 40)
 2. Ibid (p. 60)
 3. Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England (pp. 76 and 97)
 4. Ibid (p. 105)
 5. Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England (p. 108)



England as early as 1805. There had been a lecture on Kant in Paris the year preceding, and several copies of his original works found their way to the United States.¹ But it never really began to take root until 1820 when Edward Everett, newly returned from five years sojourn in Europe began to interpret Kant through exegetical discourses on the style of Voss, Wolff, Ruhnken, and Ante-Homeric remains.² About the same time William Ellery Channing was preaching his almost superstitious ideas on the sacredness of conscience and the worth of human nature to young people like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, George Ripley, and Frederick H. Hedge.¹ We may judge that he was influenced and influenced others in turn by the philosophy of Coleridge and the poetry of Wordsworth, I think, when we know that in 1821 he went to England and visited both these leaders of Transcendentalism there.¹ An extract from a letter of his written in 1820 shows even more clearly the trend of his thought at that time:³

"I have told you before how much I think Unitarianism has suffered from union with a heart withering philosophy. It has suffered also from a too exclusive application of its advocates to biblical criticism and theological controversy..... I fear we must look to other schools for thoughts that thrill us, which touch the most inward springs, and disclose to us the depths of our own souls."

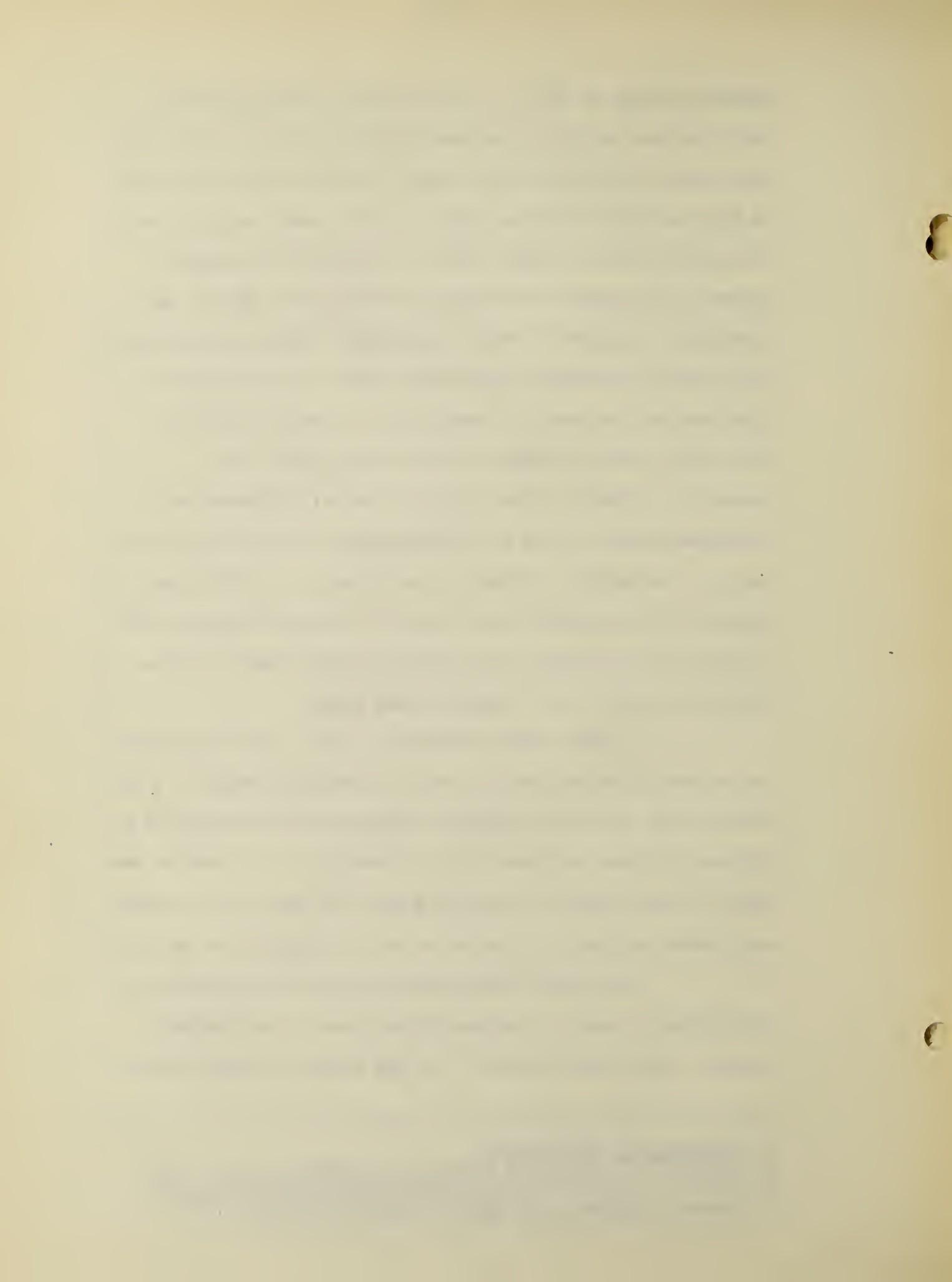
New England Transcendentalism was the culmination of the liberal movement of American Unitarianism in the eighteenth century - and a revolt from it.⁴ It was taken up by young Unitar-

1. International Encyclopedia

2. Emerson, R. W., Life and Letters in New England (Social Aims)

3. Quoted in Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism

4. Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (p. 31)



ian ministers who were beginning to chafe under formality.

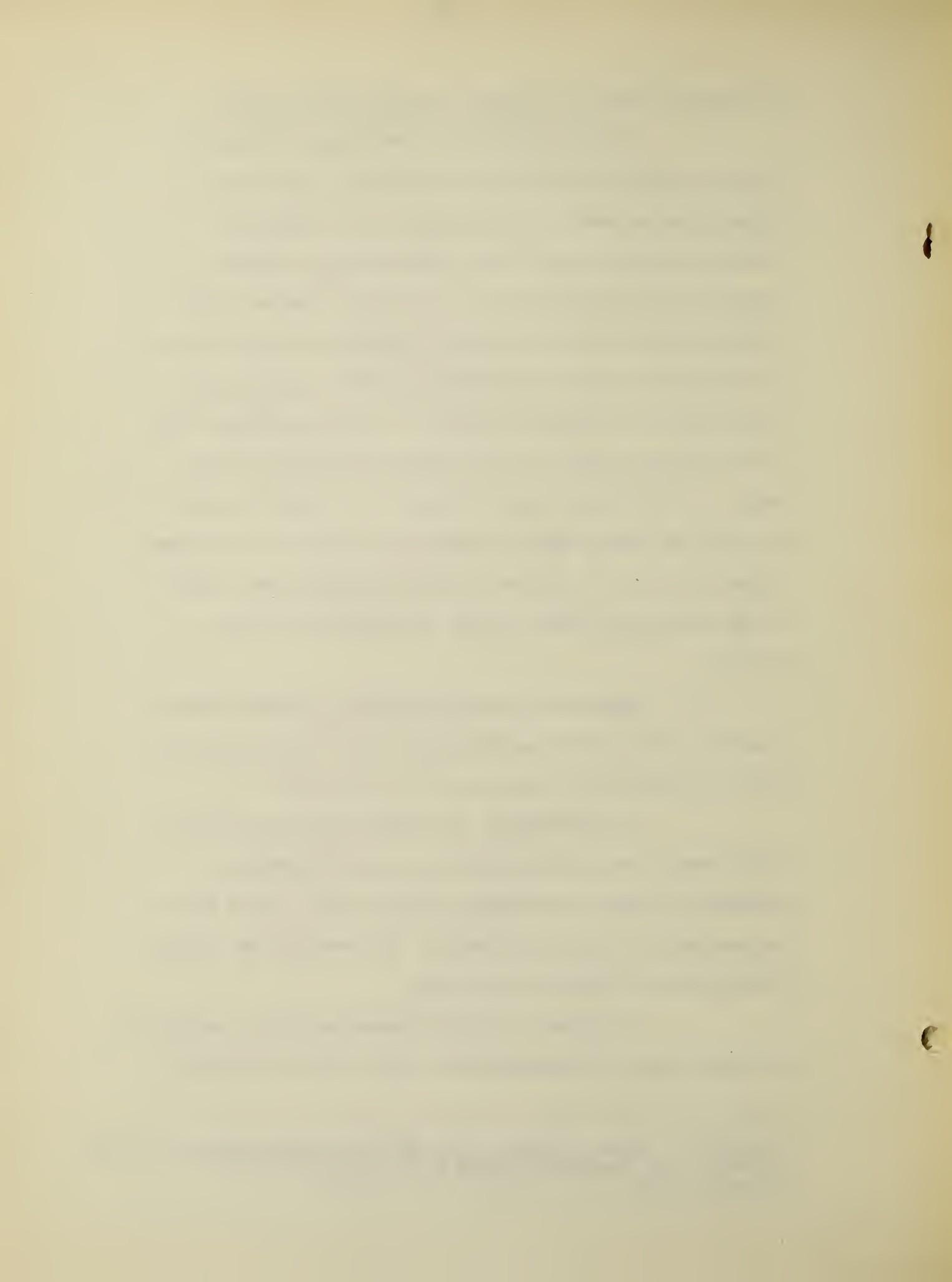
In 1823 during his period of study at Harvard Divinity School and the year after Channing's return from England, Emerson wrote to his Aunt Mary: "Dr. Channing is preaching sublime sermons every Sunday morning in Federal Street."¹; and the following year in that long passage in his journal (April 18, 1824) in which he estimates his abilities as a theologian, he says: "The highest species of reasoning upon divine subjects is rather the fruit of a moral imagination than of The Reasoning Machines such as Locke and Clarke and David Hume. Dr. Channing's Dudleian lecture is the model of what I mean, and the faculty which produced this is akin to the higher flights of fancy. I may add that the preaching most in vogue at the present day depends chiefly on imagination for its success."

Emerson was reading Wordsworth, De Stael, Byron, Coleridge, and Goethe during the whole of his college life as we know from quotations in his journals of that period.

In 1832 Emerson, the young preacher, raised the whole issue of Transcendentalism in the sermon in which he advanced the view of the Communion Service which finally led to his resignation from the pastorate.³ The same year we find the first mention of Carlyle in his diary.

In September, 1836, he summed up his own conception and experience of Transcendentalism in his first slim volume of

1. Quoted in Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (p. 66)
2. Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England (p. 120)
3. Ibid (p. 120)



essays, Nature. In this we see him as an idealist, but not as a profound metaphysician.¹ The three main ideas in the book are central to his philosophy; his other works are more or less an elaboration of their several phases.¹ In summary they are:²

1. Every man is an inlet to the divine soul of the universe and within every part of the universe is the soul of the whole. In man are the means of all knowledge of himself, of Nature, and of God.

2. Nature is a symbol of the Divine spirit and every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact - a metaphor of mind, and the realization of God in the unconscious. Nature's function is to put man into communion with God. "Man is in the center of things and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him".

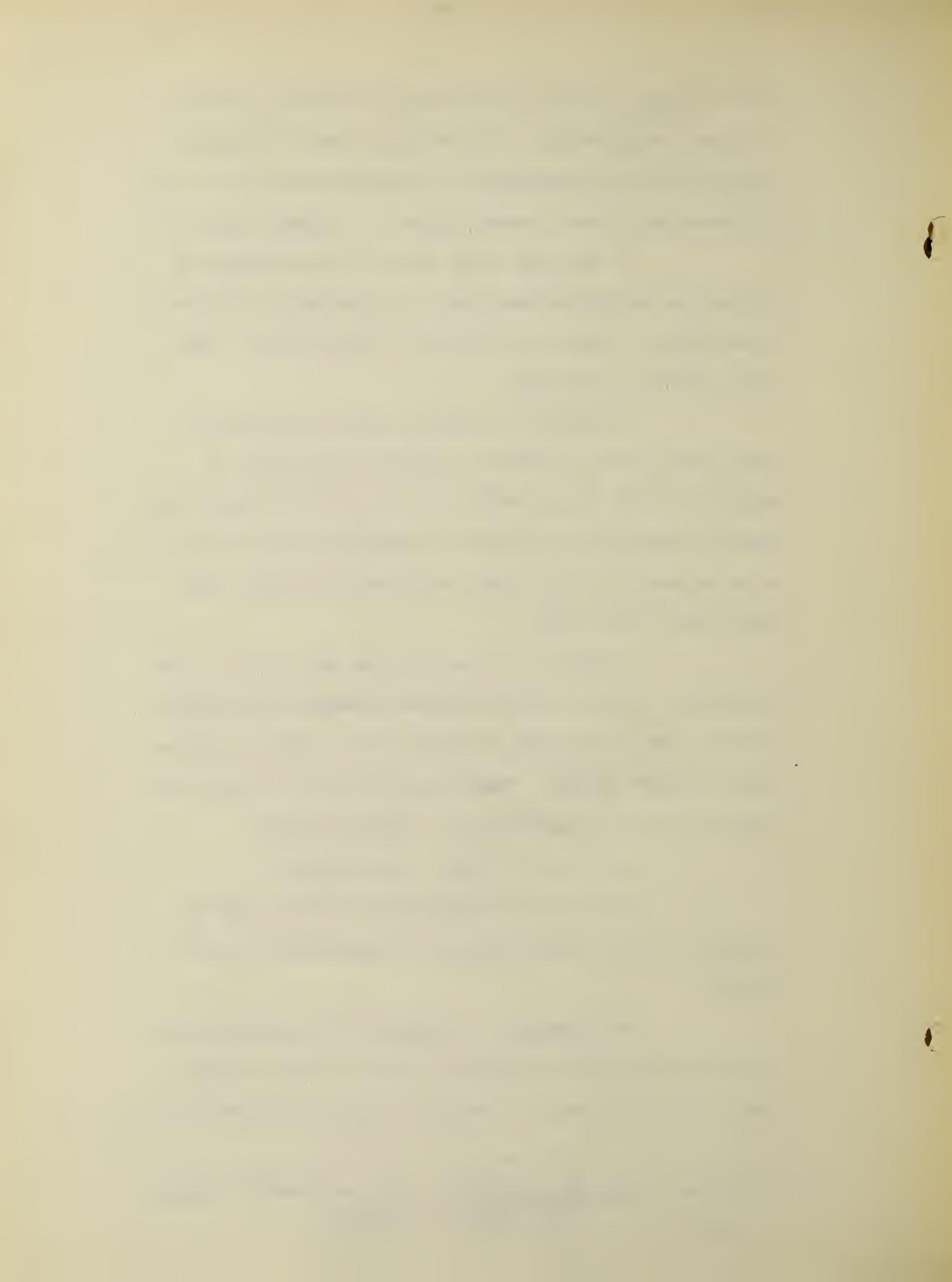
3. There is an open way from God to man and from man to God. Yet this sense of Divine inflowing is not always felt, but only in the depth of certain brief moments of exaltation do we know reality. These may be attested to only by the individual; they are mystics of the impersonal being.

A far cry from Kant to New England!

This book, as I have written before, came into the public notice at the beginning of Thoreau's senior year at Harvard.

This September, on the day of the celebration on the second centennial anniversary of Harvard College, Emerson, George Ripley, and Frederick Hedge had a chance conversation upon

1. Woodberry, Ralph Waldo Emerson (p. 48), and Emerson's Nature, The Oversoul, and History.
2. Emerson, R. W., Nature, section on Language.

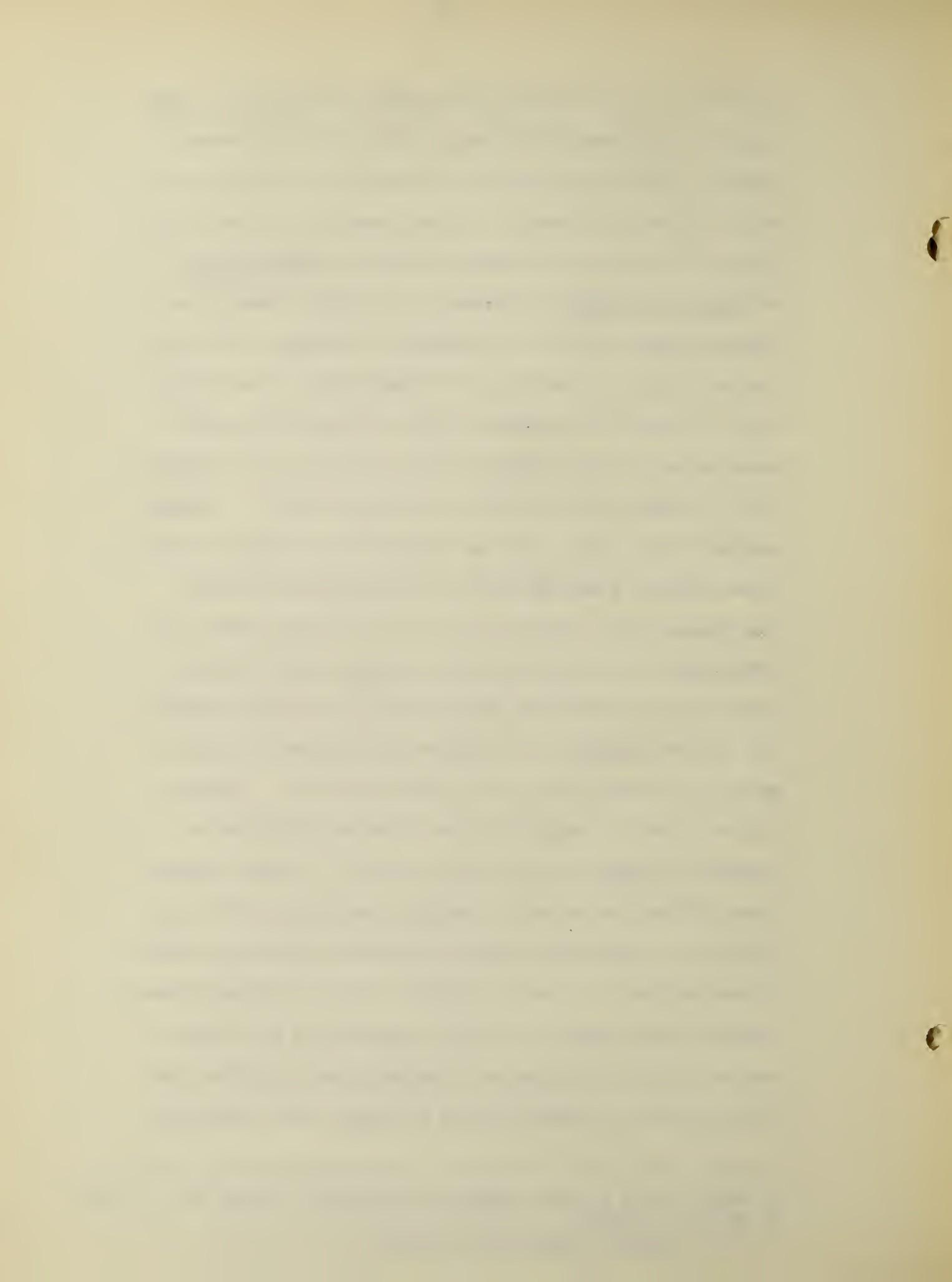


the state of current opinion in Philosophy and Religion.¹ They agreed upon the unsatisfactoriness of the serious philosophy of their day, which dated from Locke, and which had been made the basis of Unitarian theology. It was agreed also because of the ferment which Coleridge's poems and Carlyle's Characteristics and Signs of the Times had created in the minds of some of the younger clergy, that there was promise of a new era. The four decided to call a larger group of friends together the following week, to continue the discussion, with the result that about a dozen men met at George Ripley's house in Boston at the appointed time, including Orestes Brownson and Theodore Parker. Interest reached so high a point that the following week there was another, larger meeting at Emerson's house in Concord, which included Amos Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, James Freeman Clarke, and infrequently, as the meetings kept recurring, Jones Very, the Salem poet, and Henry David Thoreau entered the charmed circle.² This was the beginning of the famous Transcendentalist Club, a name given to them first by the village gossips. The group did not all hold to Emerson's ideas of Transcendentalism as expressed in Nature, - quite to the contrary. Dr. James Freeman Clarke affirms that no two of the club thought alike; but their similarity of ideals were enough to make them stimulating company for one another.³ "It was the feeling that the world was nowhere, 'Nailed up with boards', but open on all sides if we will but open our eyes, - an intolerance of authority and convention, and not any definite opinions they had in common, - that brought the

1. Hedge, quoted in Cabot, Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson (v. 1, p. 244)

2. Ibid (pp. 245-246)

3. Cabot, Memoirs of Ralph Waldo Emerson (vol. 1, p. 246)



Transcendentalists together.¹ Their Transcendentalism they expressed variously according to their natures through literary criticism and literature, theology, philosophy, and social reform.

In 1837 came Emerson's American Scholar, and in 1838 the Divinity School Address. By 1840 Theodore Parker had begun to preach the spirit of Transcendentalism from the pulpit.² The Dial, the mouthpiece of the Club, was published from 1840-1844, first with Margaret Fuller as editor and later with Emerson.² By 1844 Transcendentalism was in the heyday of its vigor.³

Thoreau had presumably been reading the literature of Transcendentalism throughout his college career. In his sophomore year he was associated with Orestes Brownson in his school teaching,³ that American theologian of Universalist, Unitarian, and finally of Roman Catholic faith, the vigorous spiritual Transcendentalist who at the time Thoreau met him (1832) was deeply interested in Dr. Channing.⁴

Thoreau's Commencement speech was Transcendentalist in spirit. His intimate acquaintance with Emerson began the year of his graduation,⁵ while during the following years of school-teaching in Concord Academy with his brother John, the voyage of the two up the Concord and Merrimac Rivers, his work in his father's pencil shop, tutoring at Concord and Staten Island, and doing odd jobs of surveying or as village handy man for his friends,⁶ he was writing articles and poems for the Dial, many of which are among the

1. Cabot, Memoirs of Ralph Waldo Emerson (vol. 1, p. 246)

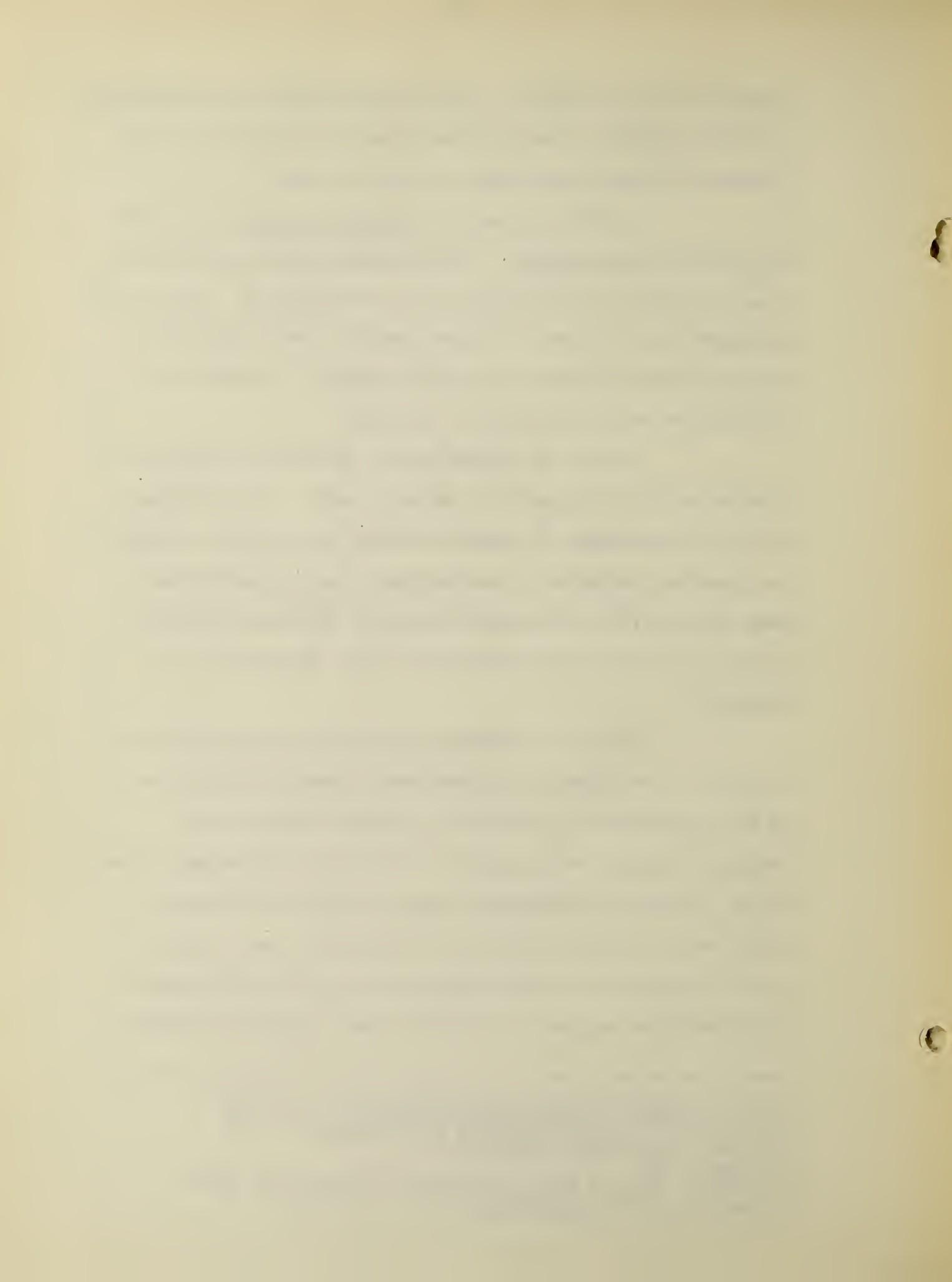
2. Frothingham, Transcendentalism in New England (p. 127)

3. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (p. 91)

4. Encyclopedia

5. Shepard, Heart of Thoreau's Journals, Chronological Table

6. Emerson, E. W., Henry Thoreau (pp. 20-21, 31-38)



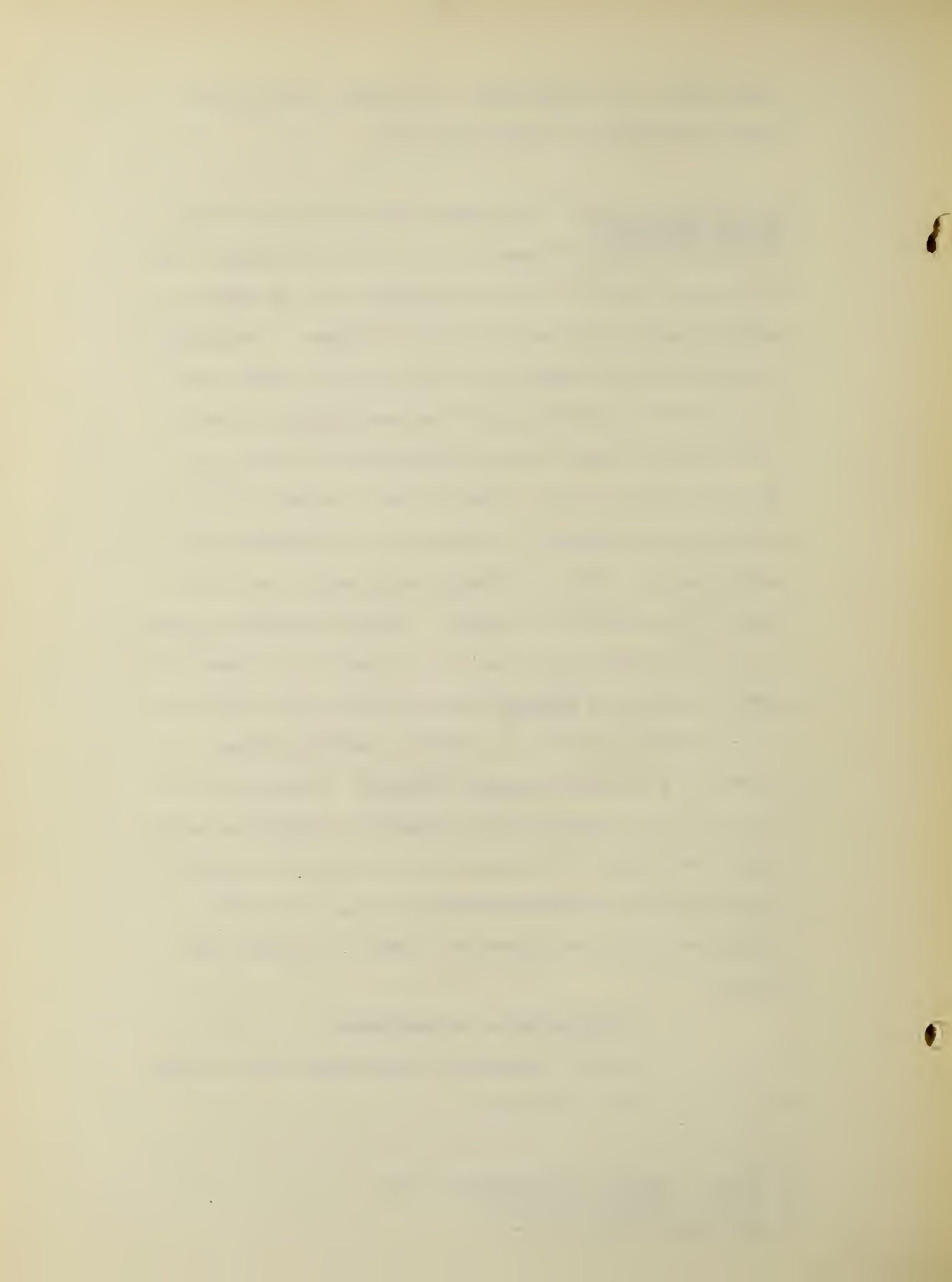
first pages in it - for example, his Winter's Walk, which is notably influenced by Transcendentalism.

The Influence of the Eastern Scriptures. The Eastern Scriptures played their part in the molding of Emerson's and Thoreau's philosophy. You will remember they were one of the sources for a new basis of morality sought by the European Romantic Schools. Translations of them were made in England and copies came to America around the year 1820 when Edward Everett was communicating to Harvard class-rooms and lecture halls his enthusiasm for Grecian and Orphic sacred literature. Emerson's early journals contain selections from Mahabarat, the Apocrypha, the Zendavesta, and from Zoroaster. There are frequent allusions to them in the essays of both Emerson and Thoreau. Emerson recommends all the Bibles of the world as the best class of books in his chapter on Books in Society and Solitude¹, and published extracts from them in the Dial which he edited. Thoreau gives them eloquent praise in the chapter on Reading in Walden.² The last two volumes of the Dial contain monthly selections of quotations called Ethnical Scriptures. It seems to me that a direct comparison between portions of these scriptures and some of the written thoughts of Emerson and Thoreau will show their relation most clearly:

"Veeshnoo³Sarma (of the Hindus)

He whose inclination turneth away from an object,
may be said to have obtained it.

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1. Emerson, Society and Solitude (p. 175)
 2. Thoreau, Walden (p. 110)
 3. The Dial, July 1842 (vol. 3)



(Thoreau: "A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone.")¹

He whose mind is at ease is possessed of all riches.

(Emerson: "Character is that sublime health which values one moment as another, and makes us great in all conditions, and is the only definition we have of freedom and power.")²

Emerson's poem on Saadi:³

"O gentle Saadi, listen not,
Tempted by thy praise of wit
Or by thirst and appetite
For the talents not thine own.

Gentle Saadi, mind thy rhyme."

(Emerson: "Do your work, respecting the excellence of the work, and not its acceptableness.")⁴

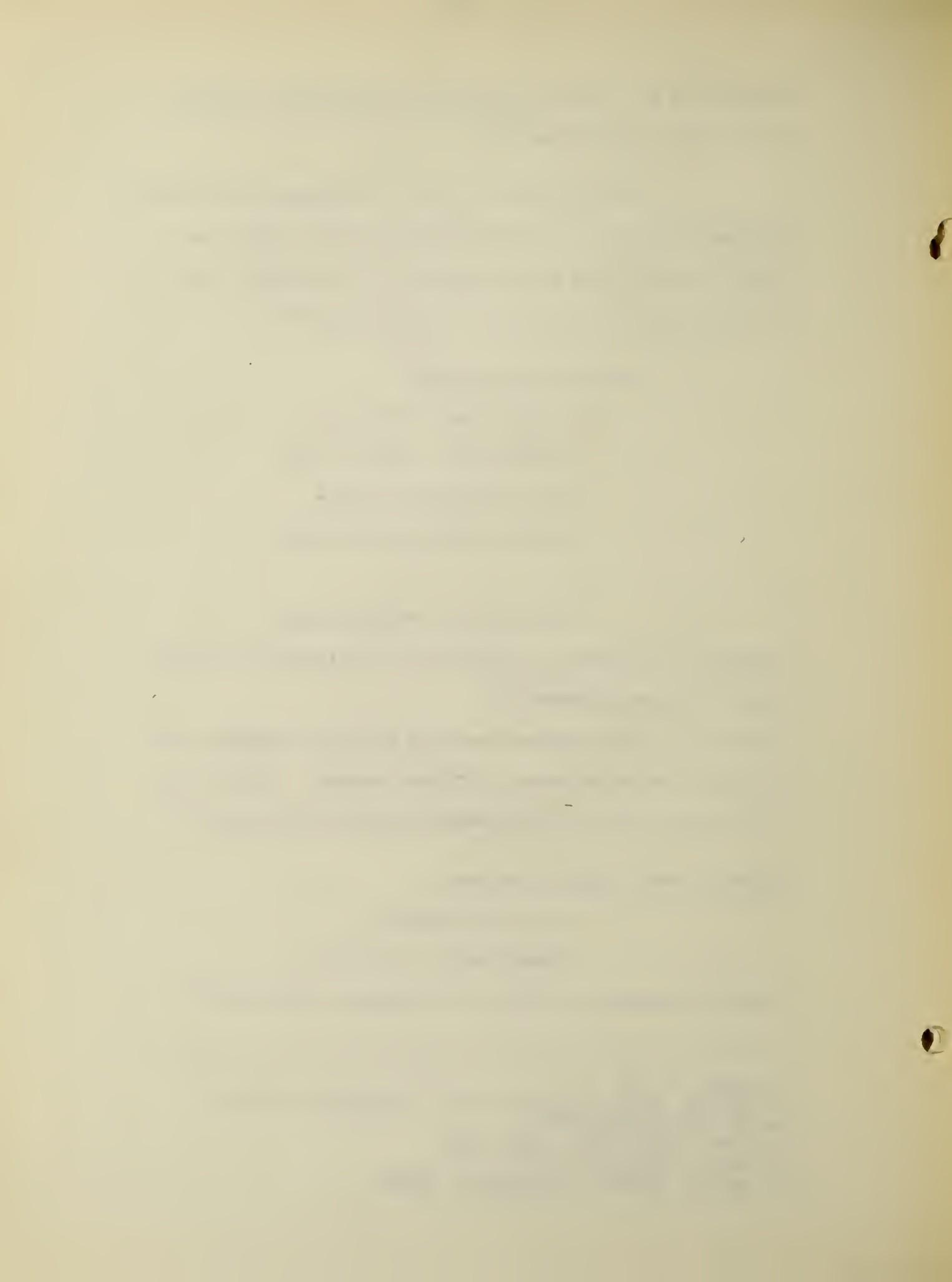
(Thoreau: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured and far away.")⁵

Emerson's poem on Saadi³ (continued)

In his very syllable
Lurketh Nature veritable.

(Emerson: "The whole of Nature is a metaphor of the mind.")⁶

1. Walden (p. 84)
 2. Emerson, Works and Days (p. 150 in Society and Solitude)
 3. The Dial, October 1842.
 4. Emerson, Resources (Social Aims)
 5. Thoreau, Walden (p. 342)
 6. Emerson, section on Language in Nature



Laws of Menu¹ (Persian)

Let every Brahmin with fixed attention consider all nature, both visible and invisible as existing in the divine spirit.

(Emerson: "In yourself is the law of Nature - the whole of Reason."²

Every Natural fact is the symbol of some spiritual fact.³

The world globes itself in a drop of dew.")⁴

Confucius⁵ (Chinese philosopher)

Chee says Yaou is the man who, in torn clothes or common apparel, sits with those dressed in furred robes without feeling shame.

(Emerson: "I ought not to allow any man because he has broad lands to feel that he is rich in my presence."⁶

(Thoreau: "Old shoes will serve a hero longer than they have served his valet. . . . A man who has found something to do will not need to get a new suit to do it in.")⁷

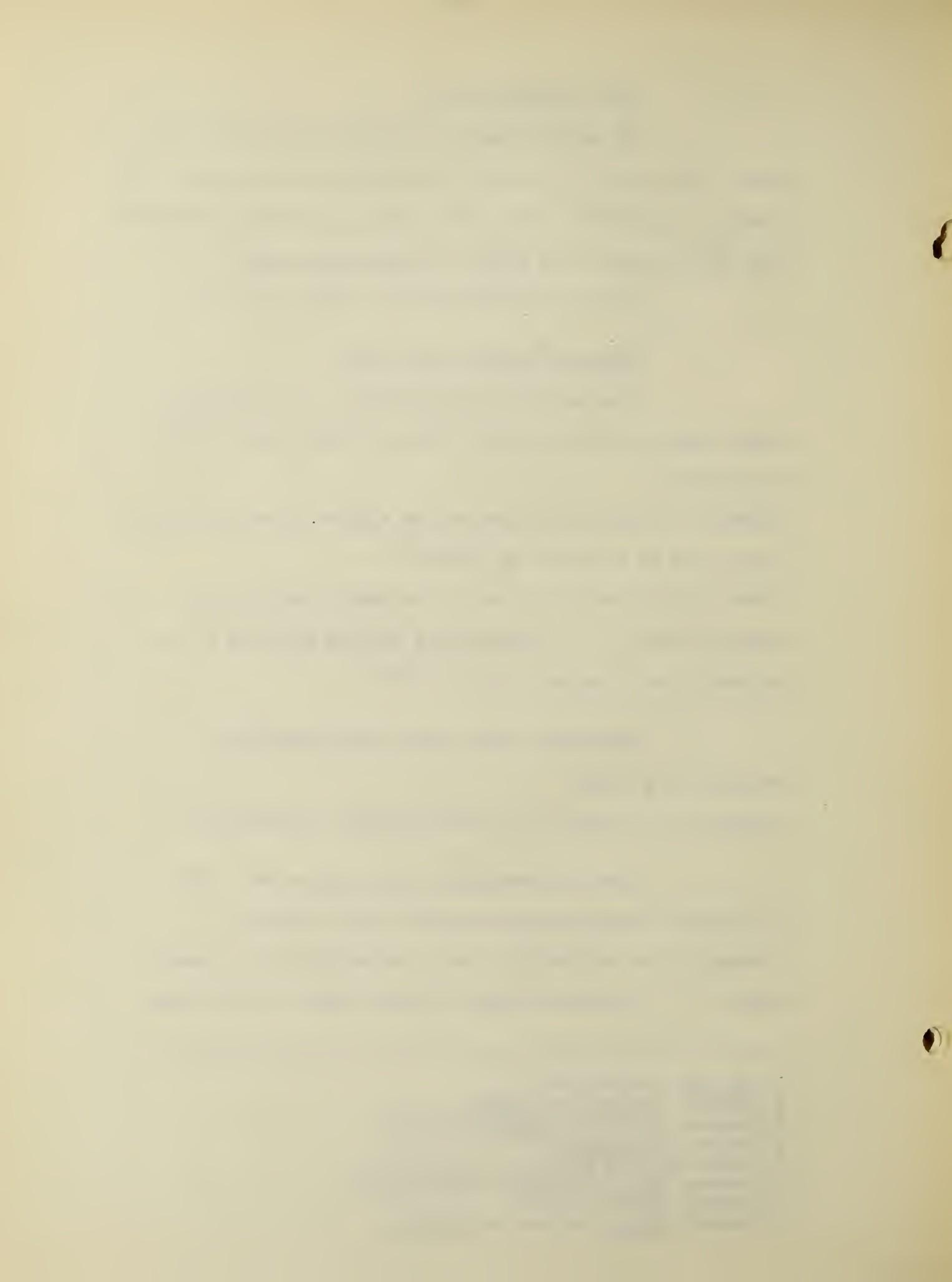
The perfect seeth unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity.

(Emerson: "In God every end is converted into a new means.")⁸

True self-knowledge is knowledge of God. Till man can attain self-control he cannot become a celestial.

(Thoreau: "It is foolish for a man to accumulate material wealth chiefly. . . . Our stock in life, our real estate, is the amount

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1. The Dial, January 1843
 2. Emerson, The American Scholar
 3. Emerson, section on Language in Nature
 4. Emerson, Compensation
 5. Selections from The Dial, February 1843
 6. Emerson, Man the Reformer in Social Aims
 7. Thoreau, Walden (p. 22)
 8. Emerson, Nature, section on Commodity



of thought we have had, which we have thought out.")¹

Mencius² (Chinese)

He who employs his whole mind will know his nature.

He who knows his nature knows Heaven.

(Emerson: "The one thing in the world of value is the active soul.")³

(Thoreau: "In proportion to our truthfulness and confidence in one another, our lives are divine and miraculous and answer to our ideal.")⁴

Zoroaster⁵

The soul of mortals compels in a certain respect, divinity in itself- possessing nothing mortal and is wholly inebriated from Deity.

(Thoreau: "Of all ebriosity, who does not prefer to be intoxicated with the air which he breathes?")⁶

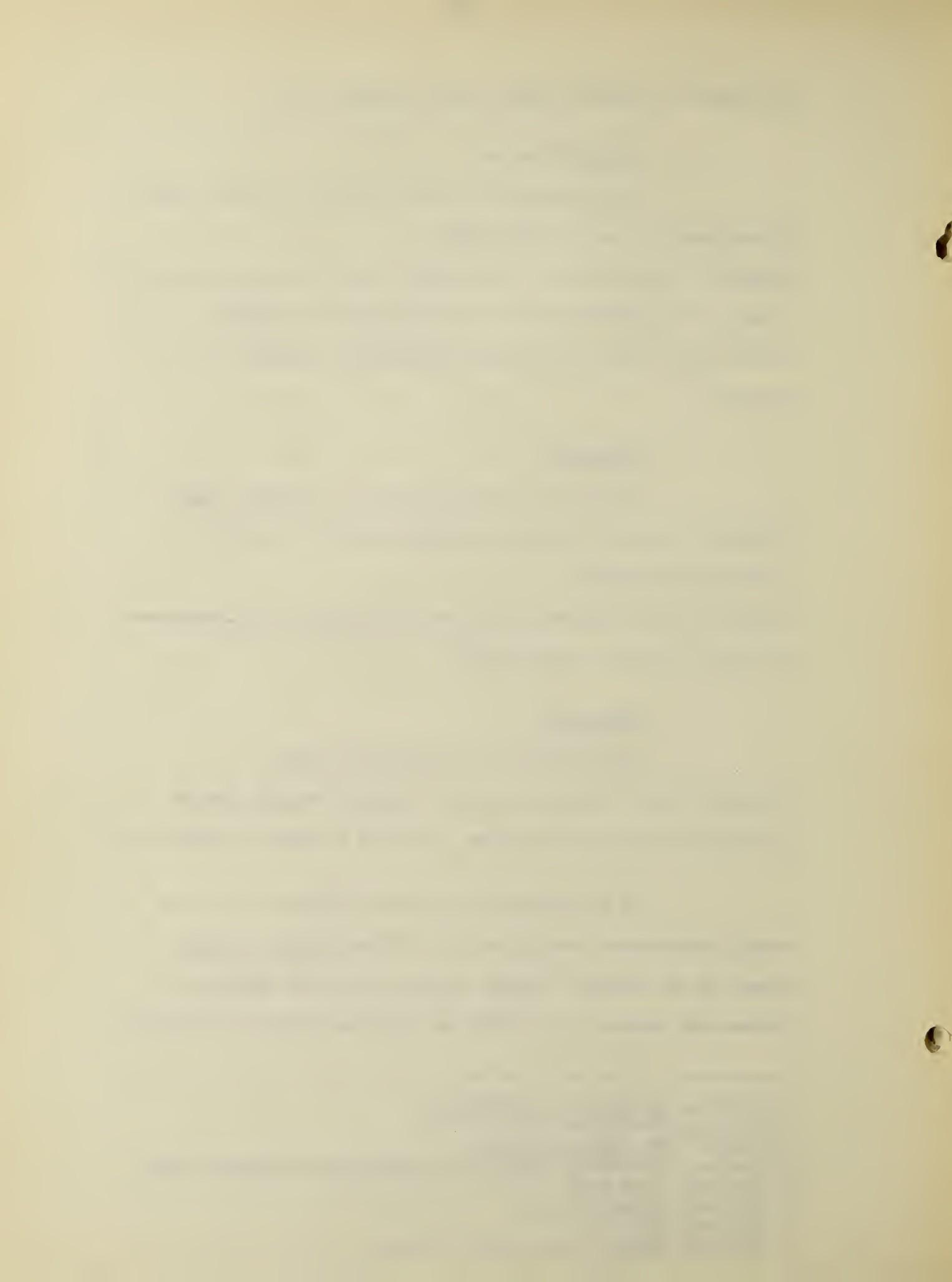
Pythagoras⁷

The possessions of friends are common.

(Emerson: "When the waters are level (between friends) then my goods pass to him, and his to me. All his is mine, all mine his.")⁸

If the similarity in these quotations seem to be merely coincidences, let anyone look through Walden, The Week, almost any of Emerson's essays, or the journals of Emerson and Thoreau and discover for himself the frequency with which references

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1. Thoreau, May Days from Excursions
 2. The Dial, March 1843
 3. Emerson, The American Scholar
 4. Thoreau, (Wednesday) A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers
 5. The Dial, June 1844
 6. Thoreau, Walden (p. 328)
 7. The Dial, June 1844
 8. Emerson, Essays, second series (p. 118)



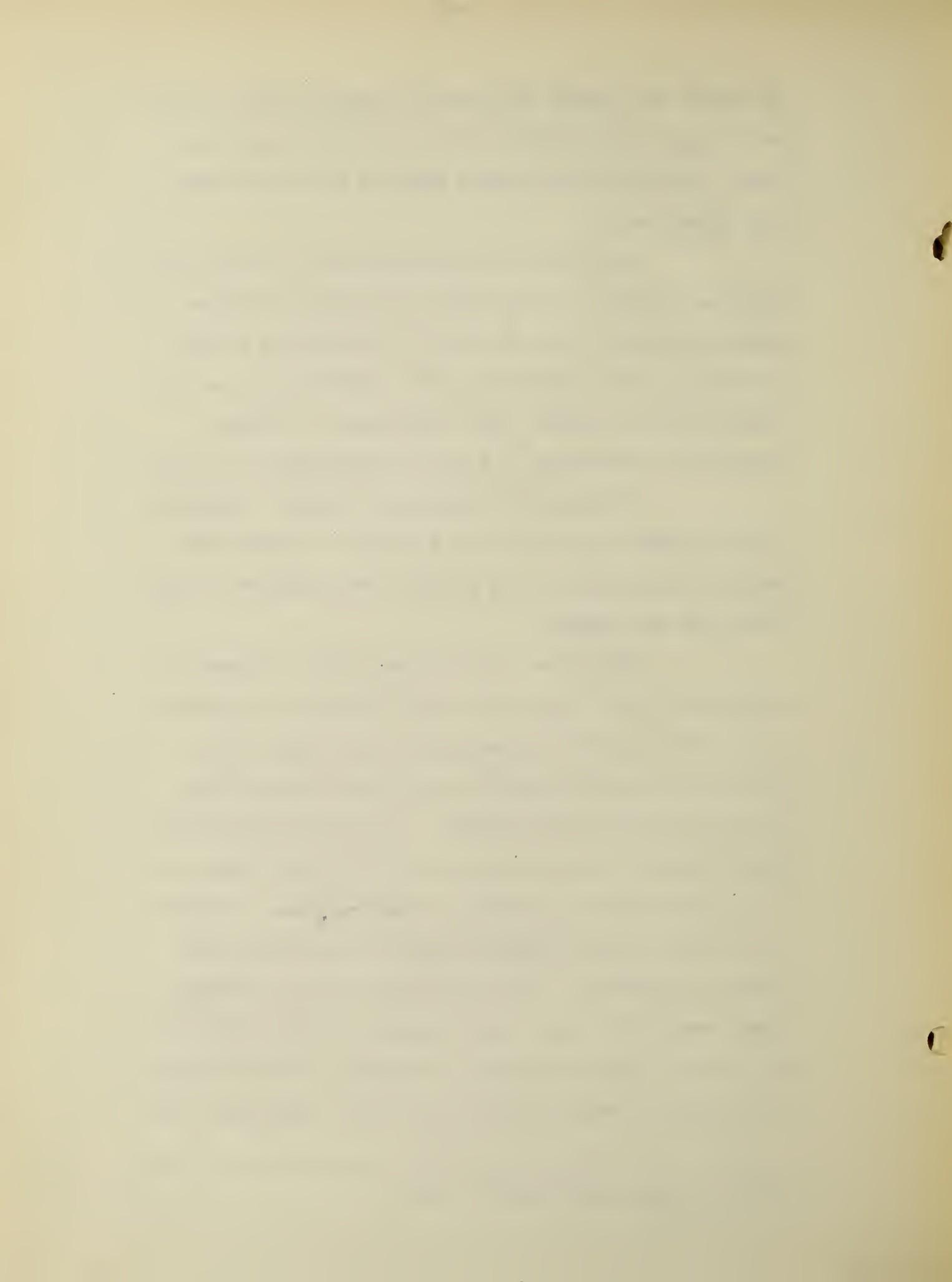
are made to the Ethnical Scriptures and passages quoted from them. What is more, the quotations used above were taken from those numbers of the Dial which Emerson edited, a task which Thoreau often helped him in.

Less directly and more difficult of tracing since they come by devious routes through the Transcendentalist and Romantic movements, is the Mysticism of the Orient to be found particularly in the expanse of Emerson's contemplation, and the tendency toward Pantheism, noted particularly in Hindu and Brahmanistic thought which is to be distinguished in both the men.

It seems to me hardly fair to close a discussion of the influence which went into the forming of Thoreau's and Emerson's philosophies of life without a few paragraphs on their effect upon one another.

Emerson had probably heard reports of Thoreau in village talk, and had personally helped him in getting pecuniary aid at Harvard upon the recommendation of Dr. Ripley, but he never became acquainted with him in any close sense until the year Thoreau graduated from college. It happened that Thoreau's sister Helen was visiting Emerson's house with some friends and the talk had turned to a discussion of self-reliance. Emerson had no sooner given his viewpoint upon the subject when Helen uttered an exclamation. "Why, my brother Henry has a passage almost exactly that in one of his diaries!" Emerson, who like his Aunt Mary enjoyed young people of promise, sent an invitation to the young man that he come and visit him.¹ Henry did so, and

1. Sanborn, Henry David Thoreau (p. 21)

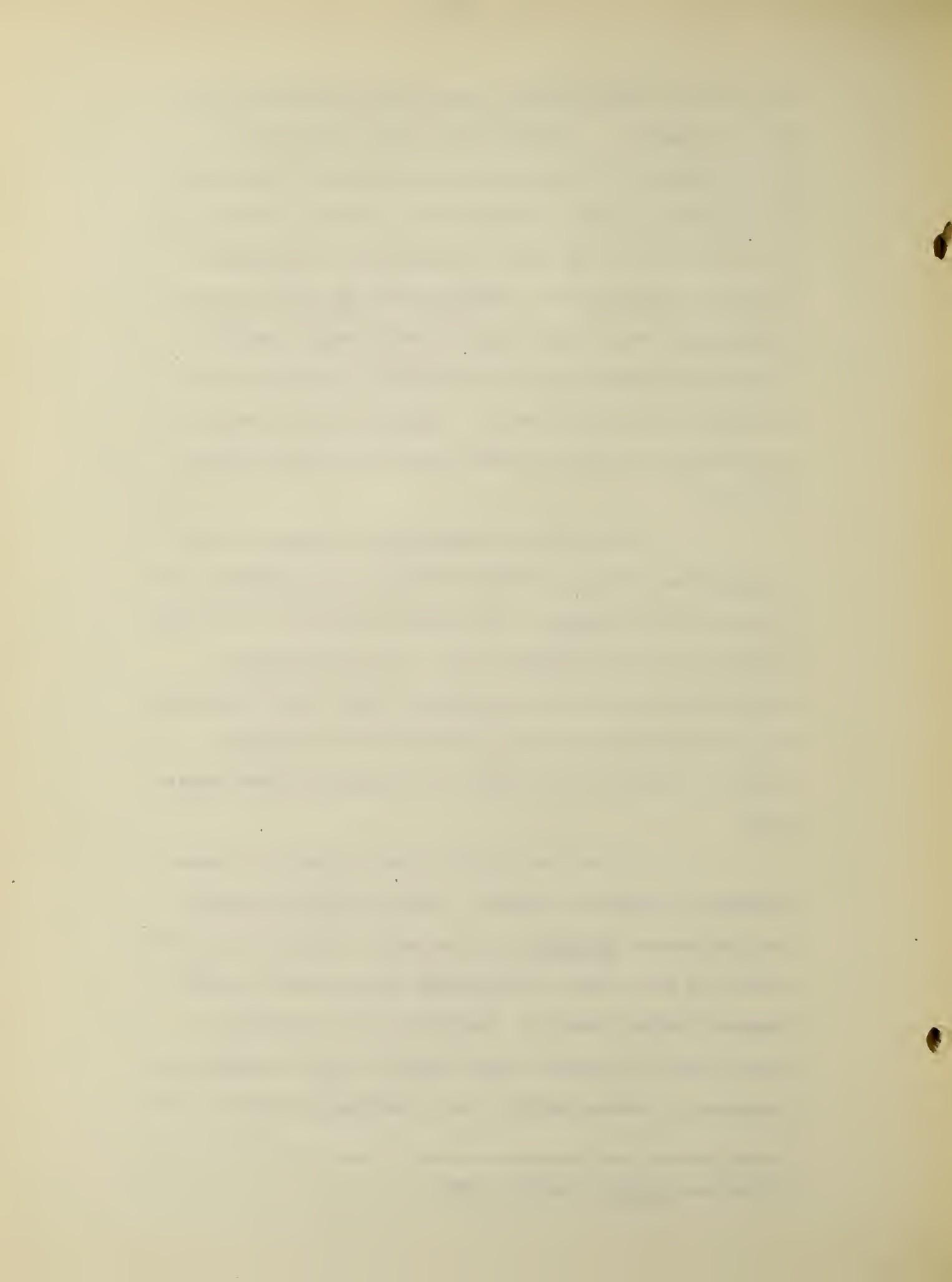


the two found common ground in thought which gradually ripened into a friendship. On February 17, 1838, occurs the first entry in Emerson's diary regarding him: "My good Henry Thoreau made this else solitary afternoon sunny with his simplicity and clear perception. How comic is simplicity in this double-dealing, quacking world! Everything that boy says makes merry with society, tho' nothing could be graver than his meaning. I told him he should write out the history of his college life, as Carlyle has of his tutoring. We agreed that the seeing the stars through a telescope would be worth all the astronomical lectures."

Just how much Emerson's life, lectures, or book on Nature had influenced Thoreau's thinking in the Harvard years is a matter of conjecture. Certainly they were all of the sort which would naturally appeal to him. But, however much unconsciously they may have colored his ideas, Henry Thoreau had too much sturdy independence of his own to be a conscious imitator of anyone, then or later in the years of close association.

In the next few years Henry's name is a common occurrence in Emerson's journals. Henry had sent the philosopher his poem on Sympathy which the latter praises as "the purest strain and the loftiest thought which has yet pealed from this unpoetic American forest."¹ Emerson's love for walking in Concord woods was enhanced under Thoreau's skilful guidance and knowledge of Nature. Emerson records that Henry thought he could

1. Emerson, Journal, August 1, 1839



tell by the flowers what day of the month it was, at least
within two days.¹

From 1841 to 1843 Thoreau lived at Emerson's house working as a sort of guest assistant gardener and doing all sorts of odd jobs which he thoroughly enjoyed and for which Emerson had little aptitude. A letter from Emerson to Carlyle in 1841 records:² "One reader and friend of yours dwells now in my house, and, as I hope, for a twelve-month to come, - Henry Thoreau, - a poet whom you may one day be proud of, - a noble, manly youth, full of melodies and inventions. We work together day by day in my garden, and I grow well and strong."

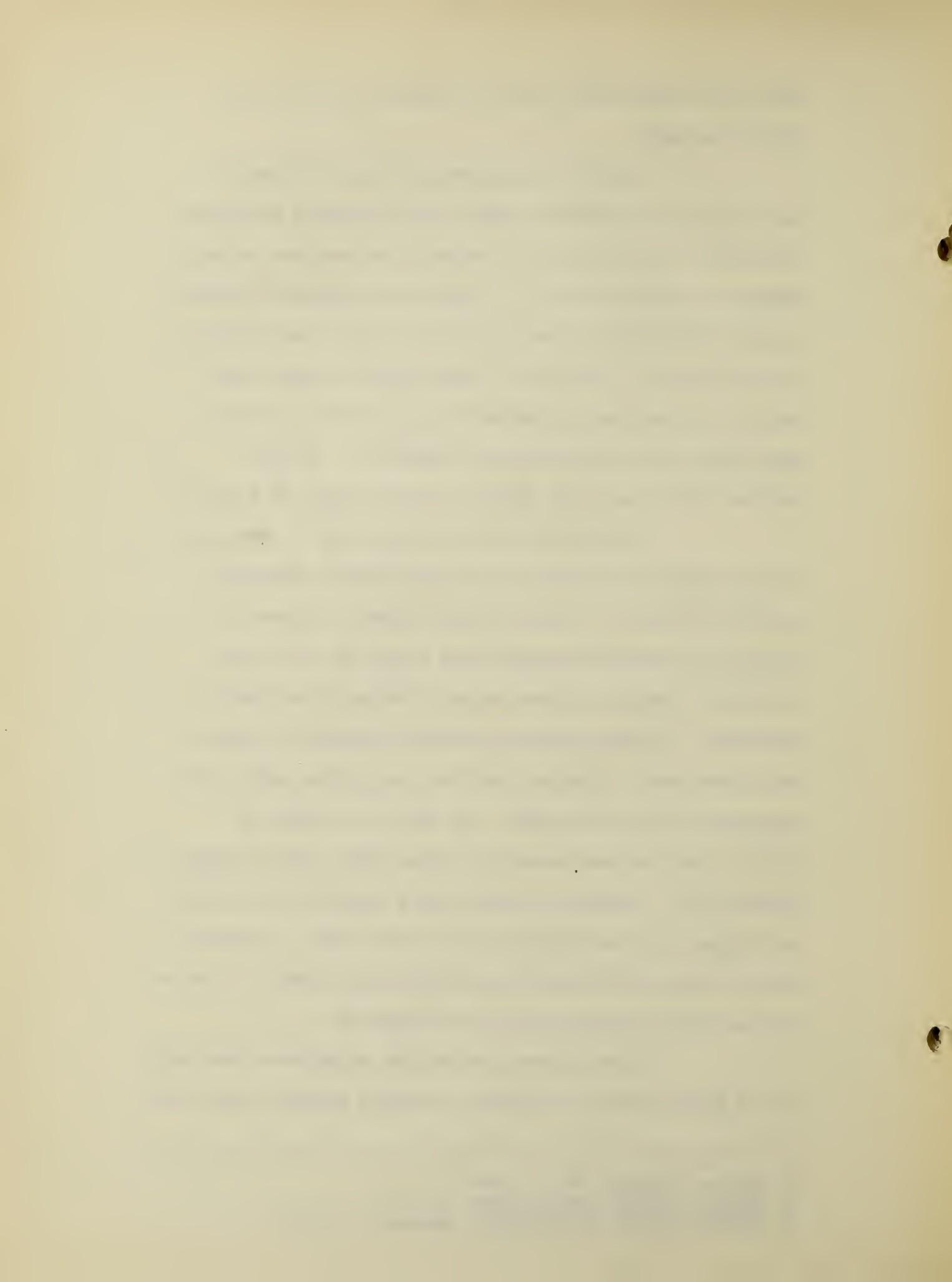
In 1842 we find in Thoreau's diary a comparison between Emerson and Carlyle and so, incidentally, Emerson's meaning to Thoreau. Emerson's field seemed to Thoreau a higher one than Carlyle's albeit his talent was not so conspicuous. Emerson's affections and intellect were equally developed. He had advanced farther than Carlyle, had seen a new heavens open. His was the life of an artist, having more variegation, finer perception. He was not so robust or elastic, but practical enough in his own field, and a faithful judge of men. Nowhere was there such a general critic of men and things - no such trustworthy and faithful man. There was more of the divine realized in him than in any other.³ A friend for any young Transcendentalist to be proud of.

As for Emerson, he was his own man more than most, yet it seemed to him that something would be lacking in his life

1. Emerson, Journal, May 21, 1857

2. Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence (vol. 1)

3. Thoreau, Journal 1842 undated, Shepard (p. 45-46)



without Thoreau,¹ who gave flesh and blood and vigor to Emerson's own system of ethics, reflected back to him his own largesse - and so fulfilled Emerson's own definition² of the office of friend as one who makes us do what we can, by showing to him his resources and meeting his challenge.

Summary of Influences Perhaps if after the fashion of Marcus Aurelius, Emerson and Thoreau could have stated their debt in 1840 to the forces which had molded their ideas, the account would have read something like this:

For Emerson:

In my parents I observed courage of thought, dignity of manner, serenity of soul, and fortitude in poverty; that it was good to read and that the earning of an education is worth hardship. From them I received my love for the Church and my interest in moral and ethical values.

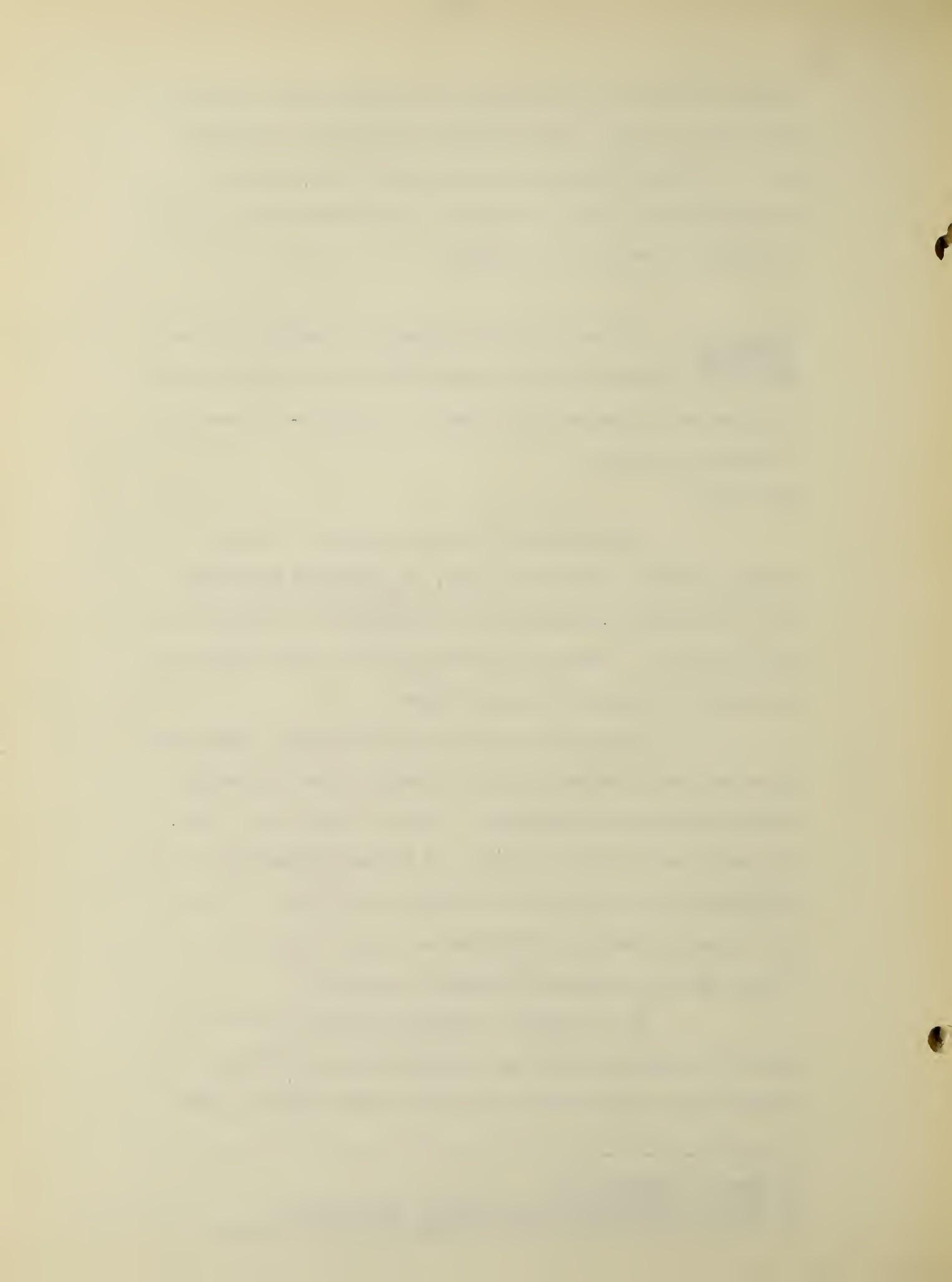
In Aunt Mary I found my first delight in thinking, my belief that a man may rely upon himself and be to a certain extent independent of externals. In her I found, too, a love for Nature which fostered my own. I learned somewhat from her independence and her sense of sublimity in religion. "I have had no hour of poetry or philosophy ever since I knew these things into which she does not enter as a genius."³

In Dr. Ripley I observed kindness and knew a sense of fineness in "that old religion which dwelt like a Sabbath peace in the country population of New England, which

1. Emerson, Journal 1852

2. Emerson, Considerations by the Way, Social Aims

3. Quoted from a letter, Cabot, Memoir of Ralph W. Emerson (v. 1, p. 30)



taught privation, self-denial, and sorrow. A man was born, not for prosperity, but to suffer for the benefit of others. -Not praise, not men's acceptance of our doing, but the Spirit's holy errand through us, absorbed the thought. How dignified this is! How all else that is called talent and worth in Paris and Washington dwindle before it!"¹

In Samuel Hoar I admired the perfect poise of a great man, a balance of self-respect and reverence for others.

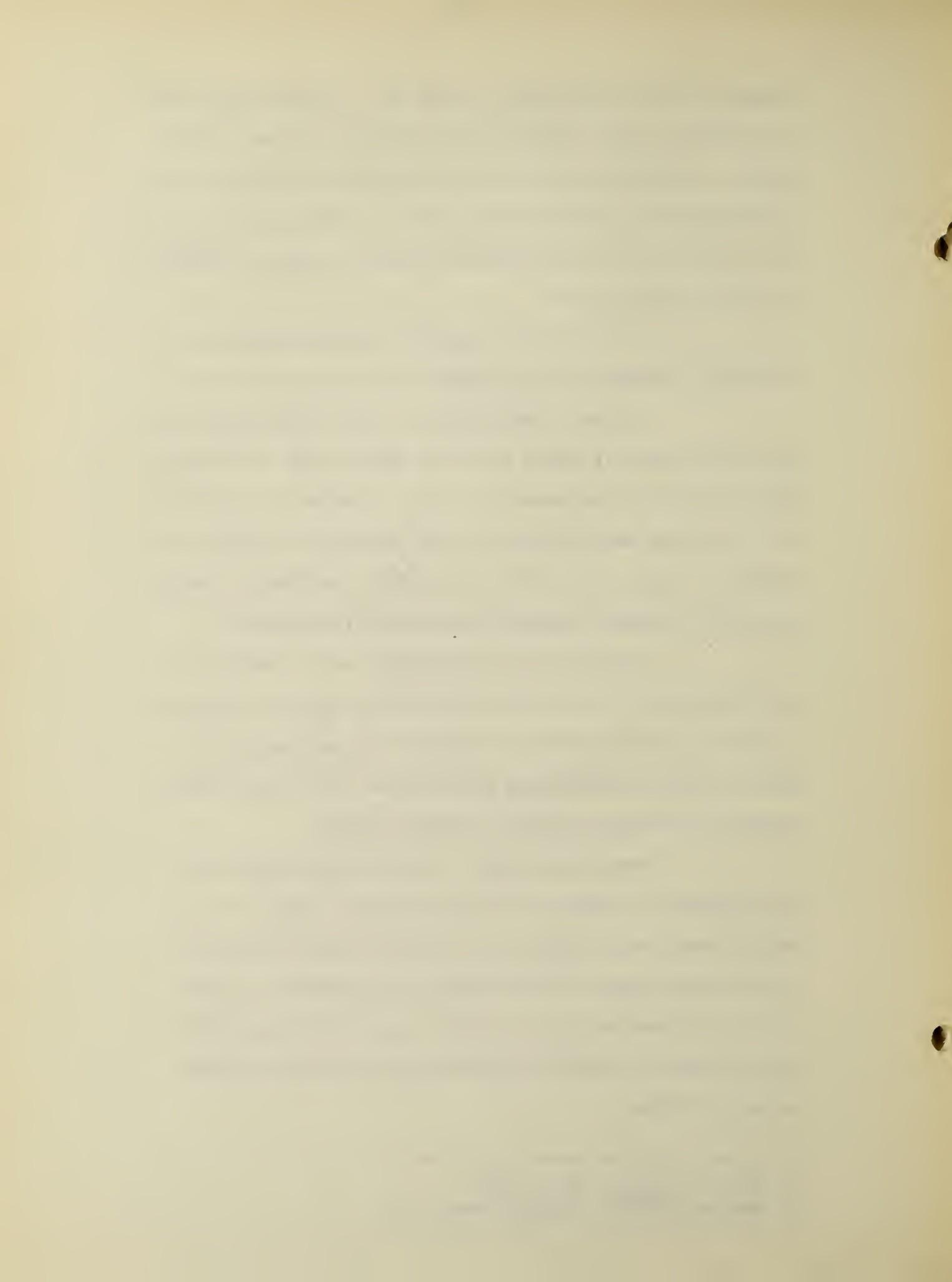
To Edward Everett Hale I owe my first glimpse into the civilizations of Greece and India, and my early acquaintance with the Ethnical Scriptures; my first enthusiasm for Coleridge and Wordsworth, and my delight in pure eloquence and elegance of rhetoric, - and a great part of any ability I may have to compose and deliver rhythmic sentences and telling illustrations.

To William Ellery Channing I owe a great many of my convictions in what is called the liberal religious viewpoint, a great deal of inspiration to formulate new moral codes for myself, and the strengthening of many views I held prior to the expression of them in my book of essays, Nature.

From Translations of Oriental and Grecian books and Scriptures I learned: that "the strength of Egypt is to sit still",² reaffirmed to myself by my own philosophy; the idealism of Plato; the sense of divine communion and breadth of outlook in the Mysticism and dualism of India and Persia; the worth of the individual as stated by Confucius, and some of his system of social ethics.

1. Emerson, Journal, May 4, 1841

2. Emerson, quoted in Journal, March 1820



In Carlyle I found the sympathy, reassurance in my principles and love of truth such as I had thought never to find in any man. "This man upholds and propels civilization. For every wooden post he knocks away he replaces one of stone.¹ His power of explaining satisfies me not;² he is worldly, not divine.³ But his letters are bark and steel and mellow wine to me."⁴

Henry David Thoreau gives meaning to my instincts and to my theory of morality, by living them in his own "pertinacious Anglo-Saxon Ethics." He enlarges my love for nature.

In the same manner Thoreau might have written:

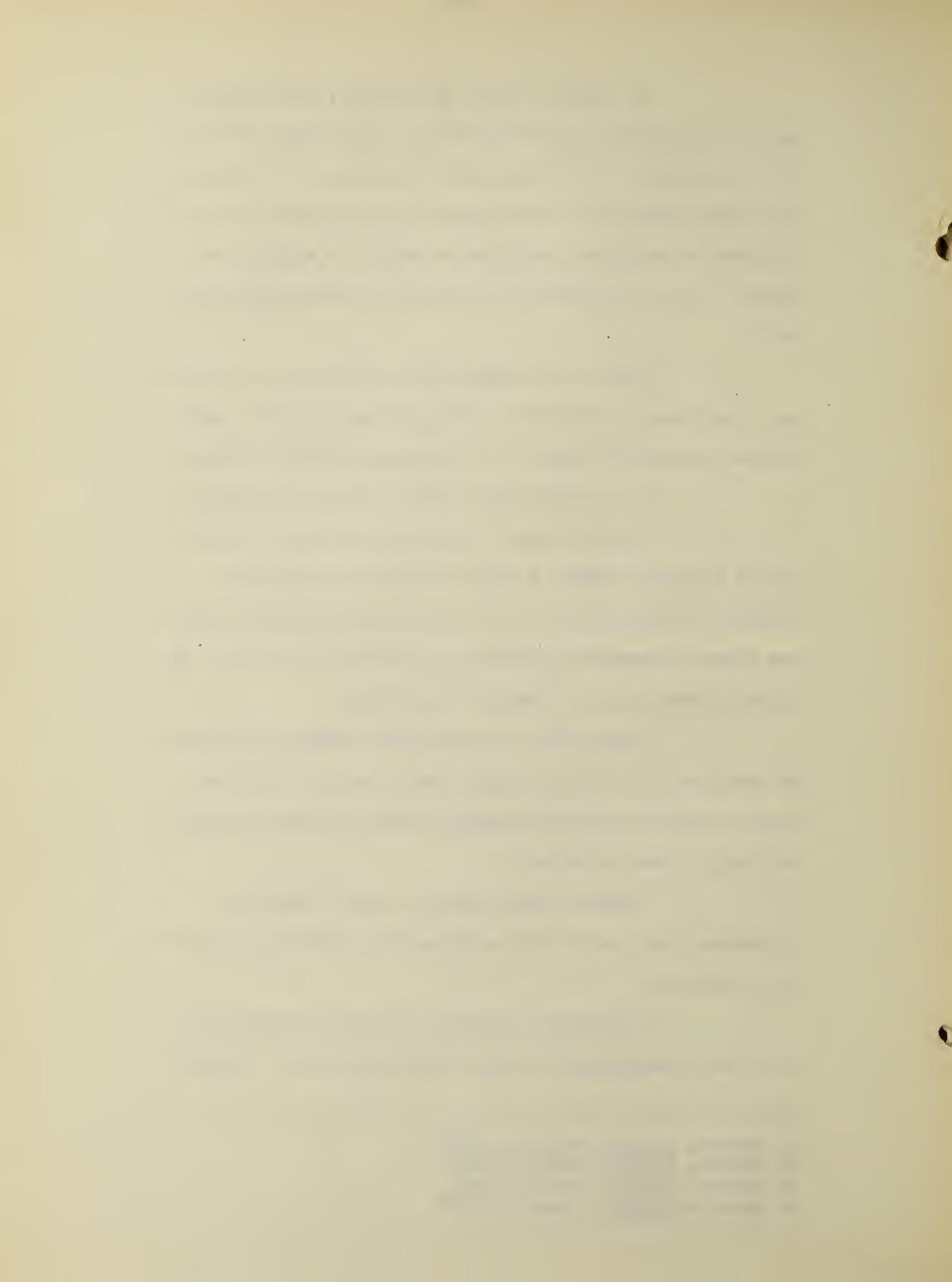
From my parents I learned the harmony of plain living and high thinking, a great deal of my knowledge and interest in Nature studies, a love for Concord hills and woods and rivers, a knack of doing things in the garden and about the house, industry, and the pride of independence.

From studies of the American Indian undertaken at an early age with my brother John - and from him - I learned silence, never to apologize except by deeds, stoicism, gravity, and again, a love of nature.

With Miss Mary Emerson I shared sincerity, directness, and love of finding truth, being stimulated by her in all these three.

From Harvard College: an ability to express myself, the acquaintance with early English dramatists, classical

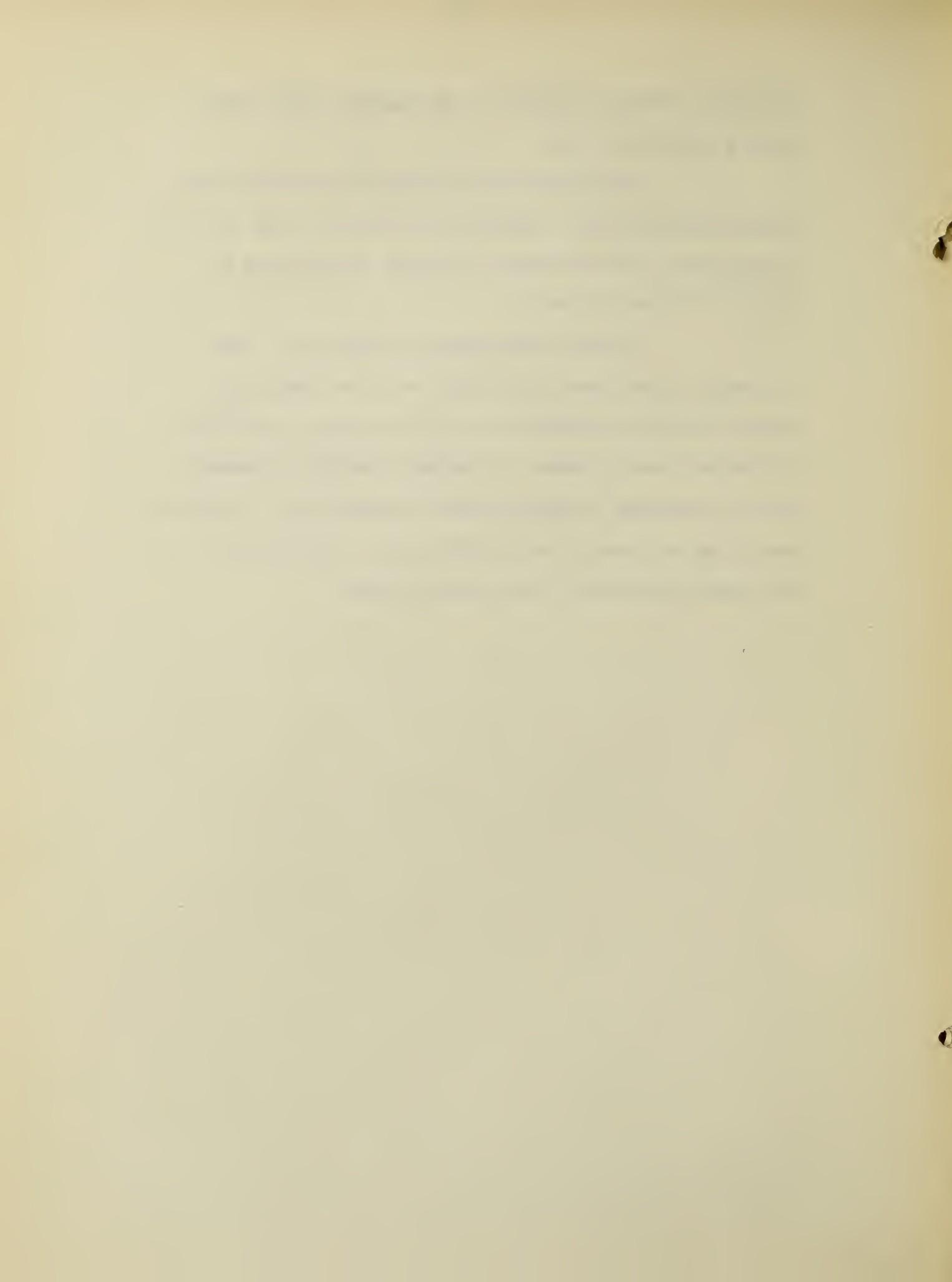
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1. Emerson, Journal, October 1, 1832
 2. Emerson, Journal, March 5, 1838
 3. Emerson, Journal, July 12, 1842
 4. Emerson, Journal, August 18, 1837



literature, Ethnical Scriptures, and many other books which I made my companions there.

From William Ellery Channing and friends in the Transcendentalist Club I received re-affirmation of my trust in my intuition, and stimulation in my sense of the divine in nature and in the individual.

To Ralph Waldo Emerson in particular I owe: indirectly a great many of my ideals as to how a man should conduct himself in society and in the lecture hall, and of relations with one's friends. From him I received a sympathy with my philosophy of what was wrong in society and an enlargement of my own ideas of how I should look at these wrongs. He was always a companion in the search for Truth.



Now to Emerson's Concord farm close by the woods, with reaches of landscape and fields for the Emerson children to play in, and lanes winding down by the river, inviting the tramp.¹ Behind the house is an orchard and a barn, and an Aeolian Harp in one of the western windows placed there by Thoreau.¹ There is a garden by the brook for the seeds and bulbs which Mrs. Emerson has brought from her old home in Plymouth - tulips and roses as well. Robins, bluebirds, cedarbirds, orioles and warblers throng in and about the balsam fir trees.¹ There are sublime mornings and sunsets there.² Inside looking out over the fields is Emerson's study lined with books, with a desk in comfortable dis-order - where Lidian³ once came to write her name and that of her boy on a page of Emerson's philosophic musings.⁴ Or to his wooded lot at Walden by the rocky ledge where he had a wild-flower garden of his own, and where, after he had first bought it, he spent whole days pruning the pines, cutting paths, and opening vistas.⁵ There he would come to stroll and linger⁵ with the sun-warmed brown needles which covered the ground with odors of crushed pine.

And then to sit on the door-sill at Thoreau's hut on the side of a hill by Walden pond, in a grove of pitch pines and hickories.⁶ Birds and squirrels overhead in the trees and audaciously in the garden which stretches in front.⁷ Inside are three chairs, "one for solitude, two for company, and three for

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1. Brooks, Emerson and Others (pp. 3-4)
 2. Garnett, (A. L. Burt) quoted from a letter of Emerson's (p. 58)
 3. Mrs. Emerson - Emerson's name for her
 4. Emerson, R. W., Journal, January 8, 1837
 5. Brooks, Emerson and Others (p. 99)
 6. Thoreau, Walden (pp. 88 and 90)
 7. Ibid (p. 163)

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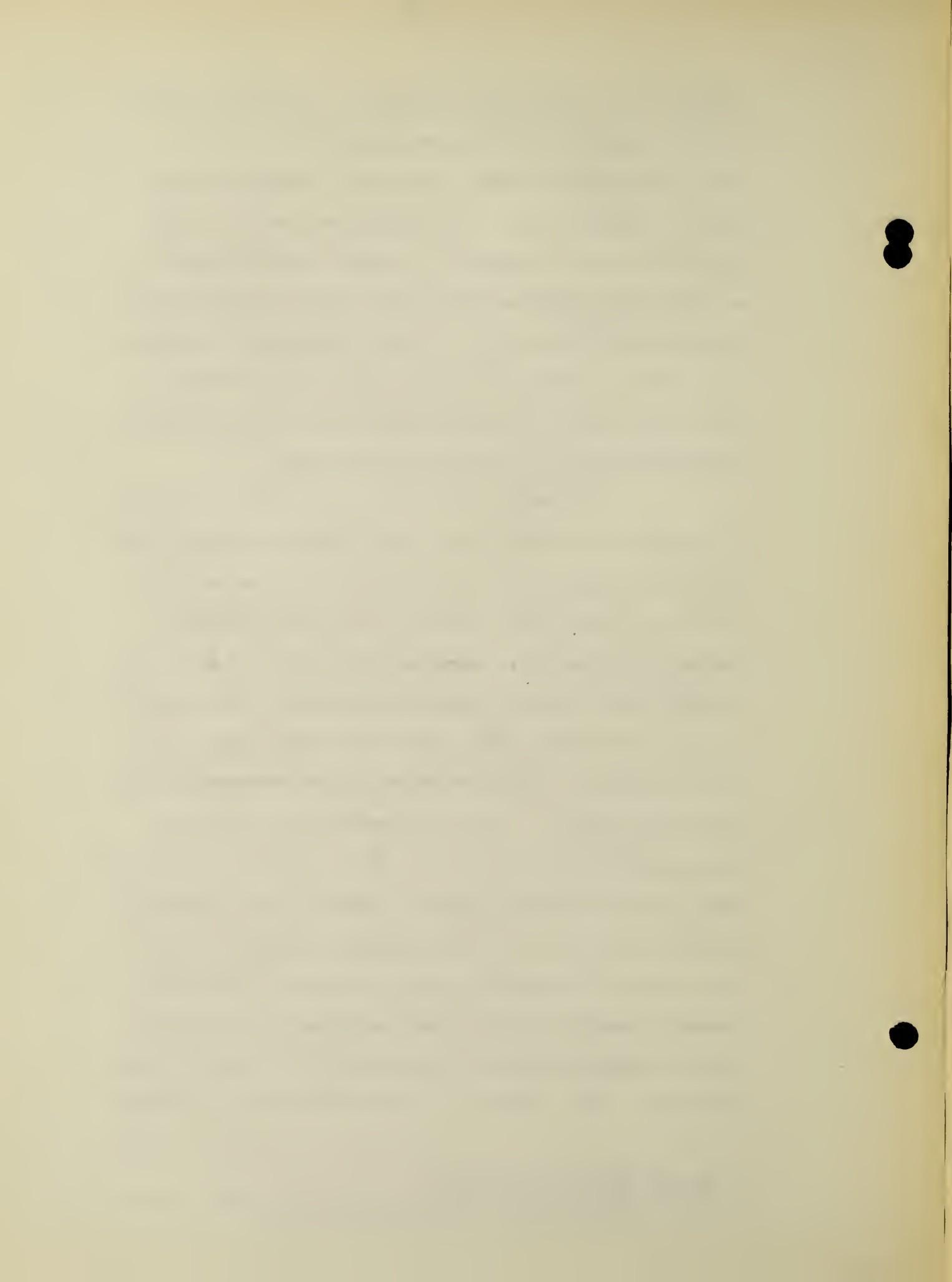
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society"¹, a cot, table, and a few books. Strawberries, blackberries, golden rod, and life-everlasting grow around the narrow footpath which leads to the pond. Underfoot are pine cones and chestnut burrs. One hundred rods south on a still evening or a drowsy afternoon one can hear the Fitchburg railway whistle and watch the steam cloud of smoke blowing back over the long black train of cars. A fish hawk dimples the surface of the pond and brings up a fish:- Places where the diaries of the two took root in mature life beyond the time when formative influences from the outside had greatest effect.

In studying the individualistic views of Emerson and Thoreau in their lives and in their writings, we shall come against the stumbling block of almost all modern appreciation of the two: Thoreau wrote, spoke, and lived his principles; Emerson for the most part seemed merely to speak and write his. We may find that Thoreau preaches non-conformity, the worth of solitude - gets himself shut in jail for refusal to pay a poll tax, and retreats to Walden banks to find his solitude in a hut of his own building. Emerson with an even more revibrating "iron-string"² exalts self-reliance and the need for solitude, but beyond the one incident of resigning his pulpit for scruples in his early ministry, we find him apparently leading the conventional life of his neighbors as far as practical affairs were concerned, however much his natural scholarly aloofness might keep him from an active part in their back door gossip or social gatherings. What is more, he refuses his aid to the Brook Farm

1. Thoreau, Walden, (pp. 118-119)

2. Emerson, Self-Reliance: "Trust thyself, every heart vibrates to that iron string."

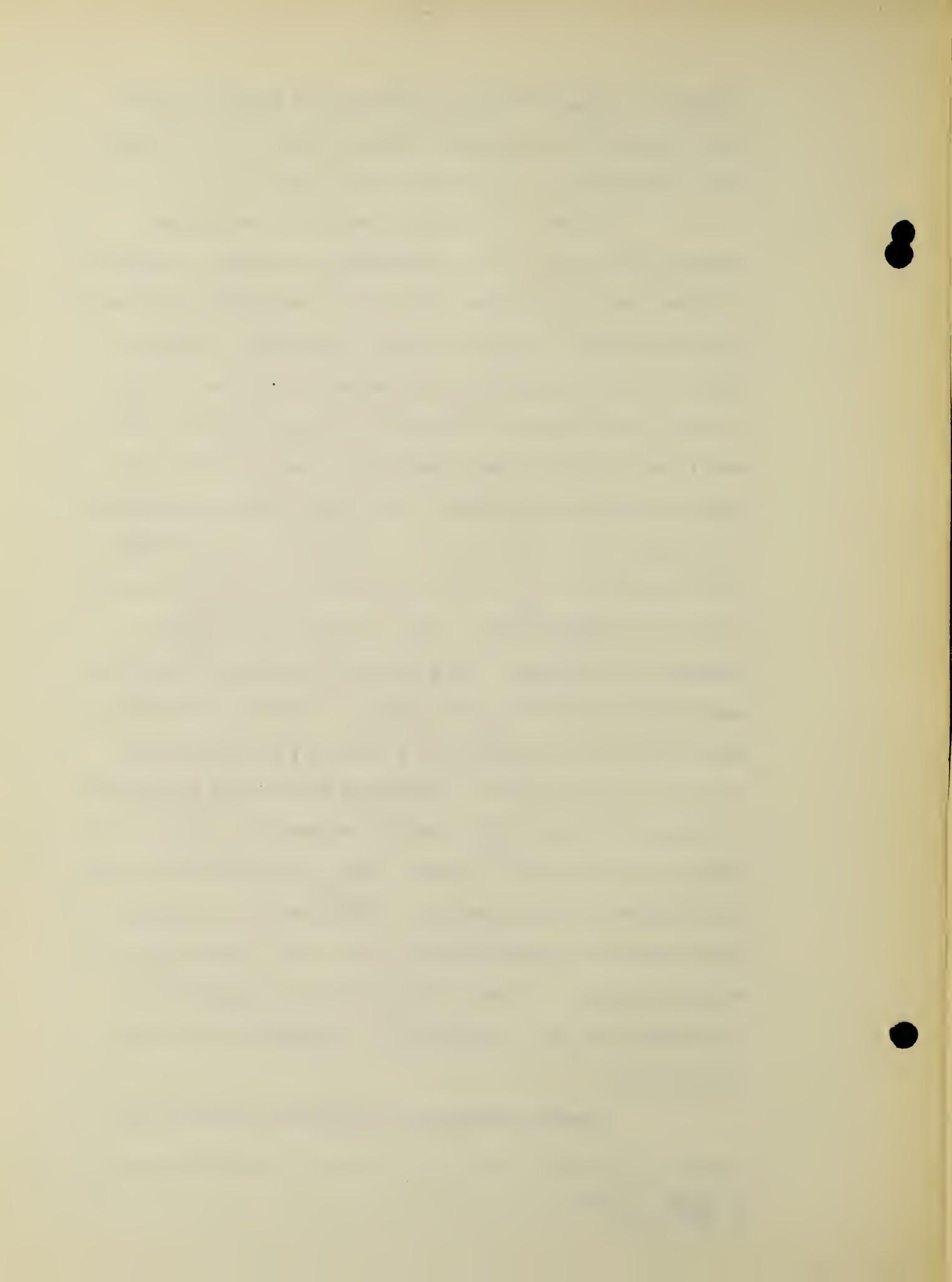


Community, a group of Social experimenters who sought to foster self-reliance and transcendental search for truth by an idealized form of group life of which we shall speak later.

In the first place the natures of the two men although ideally similar was temperamentally divergent. Emerson at fifteen was older, graver, more given to deliberation than was Thoreau at thirty - perhaps at the day of his death. Much as Emerson rebuked himself for it, his physical inertia was a thing he never quite overcame - a tendency to procrastinate and a slowness to action which at many times seems to me to have made his viewpoint broader than Thoreau's -more purely idealistic, although not so practically individualistic. Thoreau, on the other hand, had a certain young vigor and love of the physical thrill of doing things which Emerson lacked. His force expressed itself in paradoxes and oftentimes in over-statement in his writings (as for example these two sentences from Walden: "I never found the companion that was so companionable in solitude"¹, and, "I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors; they have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me anything to the purpose."²); however, they may ring true and strong - and oftentimes in an exaggeration of difference which leads to an almost swagger of unconventionality in his life, though we feel it thoroughly sincere. Thoreau likes to feel his strength a bit, intellectually as well as physically. It reassures him of his individuality.

Emerson recognizes the difference between the two

1. Walden (p. 142)
2. Ibid (p. 8)



friends in a June 1856 entry in his journal:

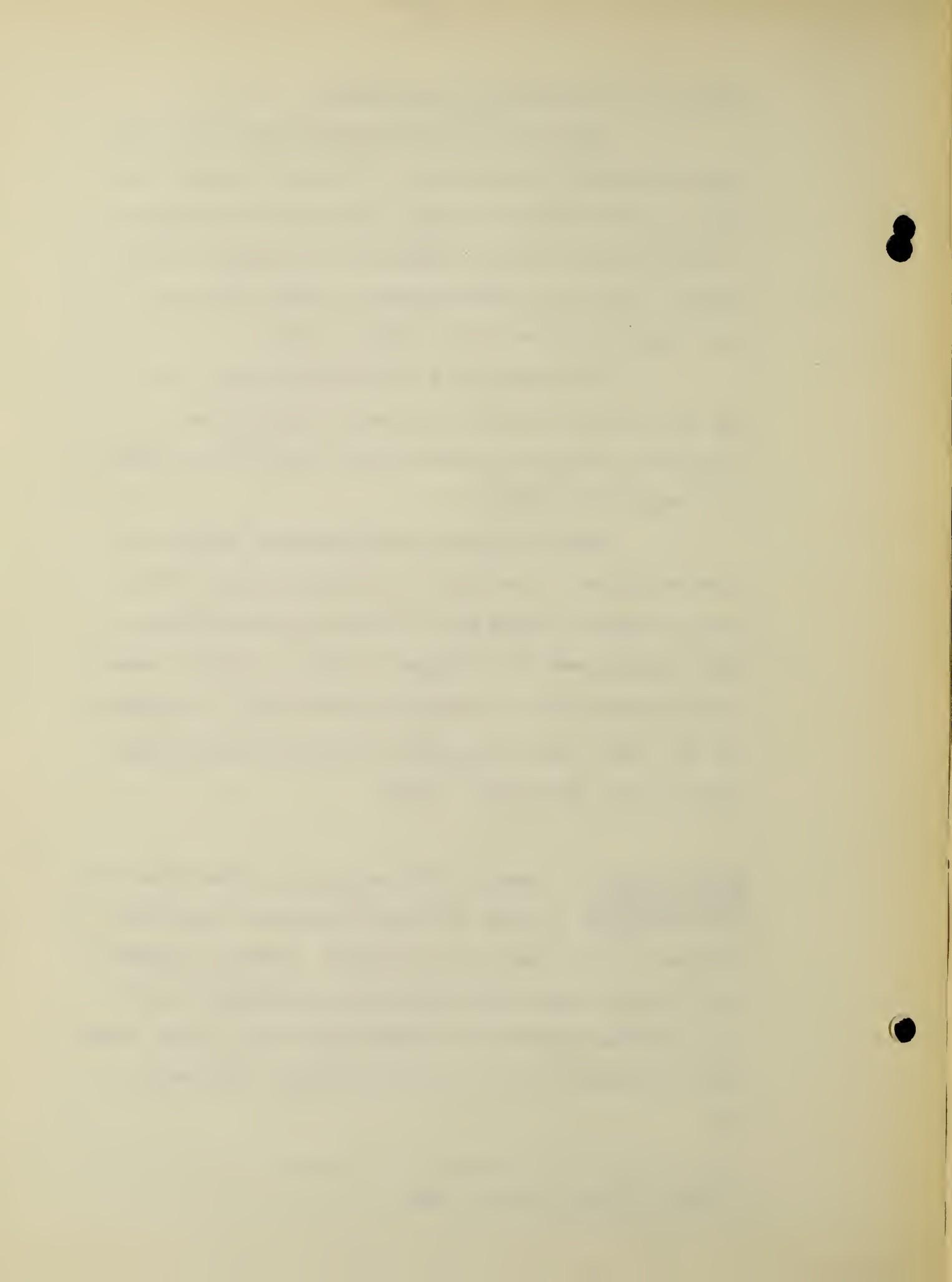
"Thoreau gives me in flesh and blood pertinacious Anglo-Saxon belief in my own ethics. He is far more real, and daily practically obeying them than I and fortifies my memory at all times with an affirmative experience which refuses to be set aside." And later, on reading Thoreau's journals after his death, Emerson observes: (in the Journal of 1862)

"In reading him I find the same thoughts, the same spirit that is in me, but he takes a step beyond and illustrates by excellent images that which I should have conveyed in a sleepy generalization."

Which personality was intrinsically worthier is beyond our judgment if we choose to disregard the test of their relative popularity today; which life was the more consistent is easier argument, and that I propose to discuss a little in connection with their various attitudes and beliefs; first - concerning the Past - their ideas of the worth of Tradition and the Classics where they were essentially at union.

Their Attitude toward Tradition and the Classics. Emerson filled many of his journal pages with passages of Oriental scriptures, Shakespeare, Montaigne, and his other favorite writers.¹ Thoreau in excluding practically all human relationships by his experimental hermit's life at Walden, nevertheless took with him his Plato, Homer, Dante, Bible, Shakespeare, and other books which seemed indispensable to him.

1. Emerson, Journal, June 24, 1863



Emerson thinks it always an economy of time to read old and famed books.¹ The great men of all time speak to reality in us, setting at naught all things in the present which are foreign to our personalities, and putting us into communion with the sources of Truth. "Nevertheless, the source of Truth lies deep within each one of our intuitions. Truth in us unfolds to the comprehension of greater truths which communion with God reveals to us. Thus classics as nature reveal to us our real selves."² To Thoreau comes the visions which were opened by the oldest Hindu philosophers to men in all ages who should understand and desire them.³

But neither Emerson nor Thoreau read that they might quote or might be other Plato or Mahomets, but solely that through conversation with these men they might be more truly themselves, through having a larger understanding of their powers.⁴ and ⁵ We are not to stand looking at the lives of heroic ancients in a worshipful desire to imitate them, but having learned how good they were, we are to make ourselves even greater.⁵ Great men have existed that there may be greater men.⁶ No passive reverence for the traditions which have clustered around them will do. In the fullness of all natural law lies all absolute greatness received by men of all ages in the degree with which they were guided by their own genius, which ever dwells in communication with this natural power.⁷ Now these men can bring us by their words and lives into a closer communication with the

1. Thoreau, Walden (p. 103)

2. Self-Reliance

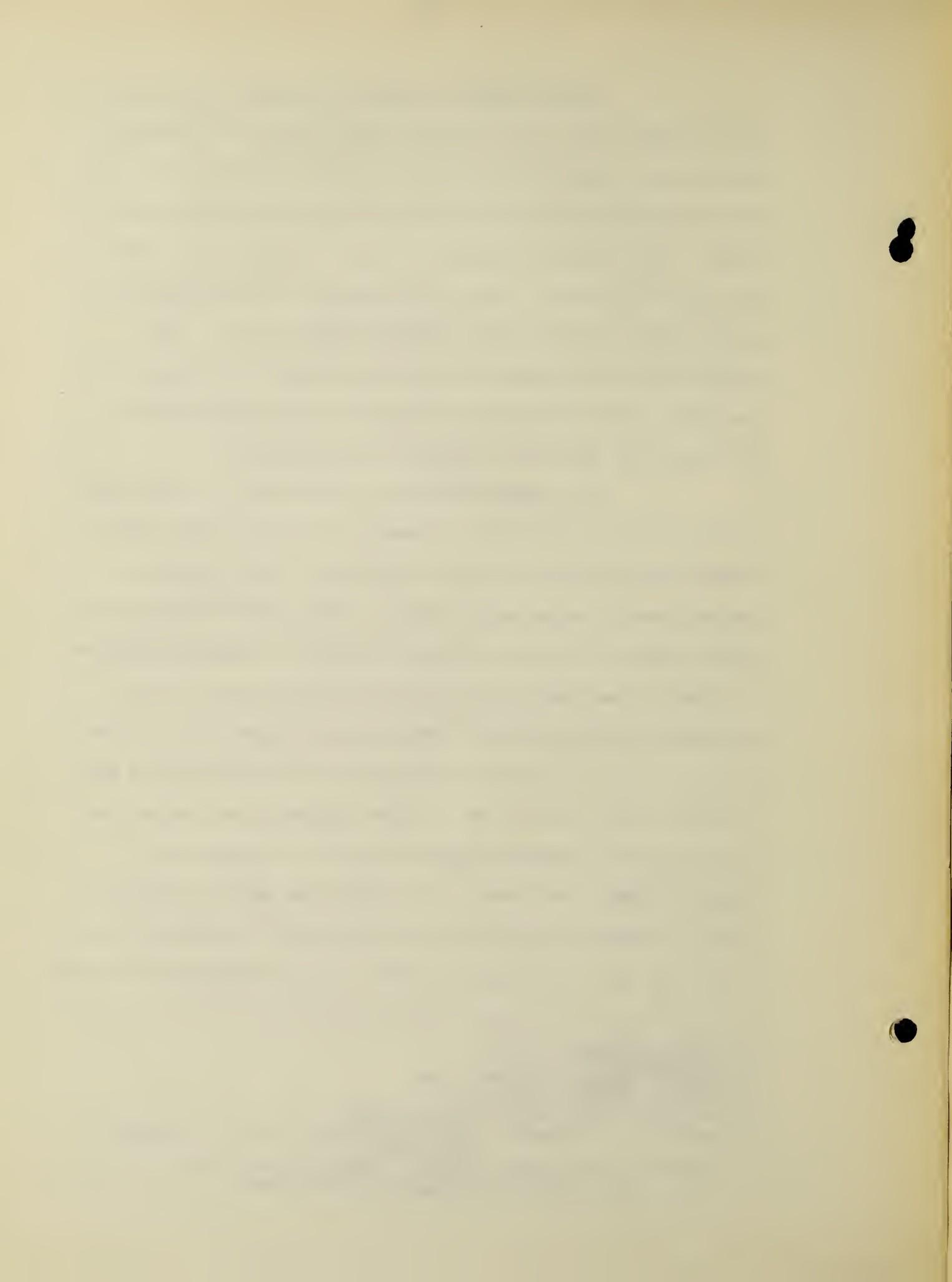
3. Emerson, Journal, October, 1842

4. Thoreau, Walden (p. 103)

5. Indirectly from Emerson, Self-Reliance

6. Indirectly from Emerson, Uses of Great Men (p. 32) in Representative Men

7. Indirectly from Emerson, History, Essays (first series, p. 11) and from Thoreau, Walden (pp. 103 and 104)



Source, but our individual power is new in nature¹ and may be even greater than theirs. "Christ", says Emerson, "preaches the greatness of men, but we hear only the greatness of Christ."² . . . and, "Jesus was Jesus because he refused to listen to another and listened at home." "Everything which Jesus or Plato thought we can think; our mind thus becomes infinite - universal." Plato and Moses, having explored tradition to know its worth for them, spoke from the authority of instinct in their own experiences - and so must we speak from our sovereign convictions.

Convention The theories of Emerson and Thoreau in regard to
and
Custom. the worth of Convention and Custom were also consistently individualistic.

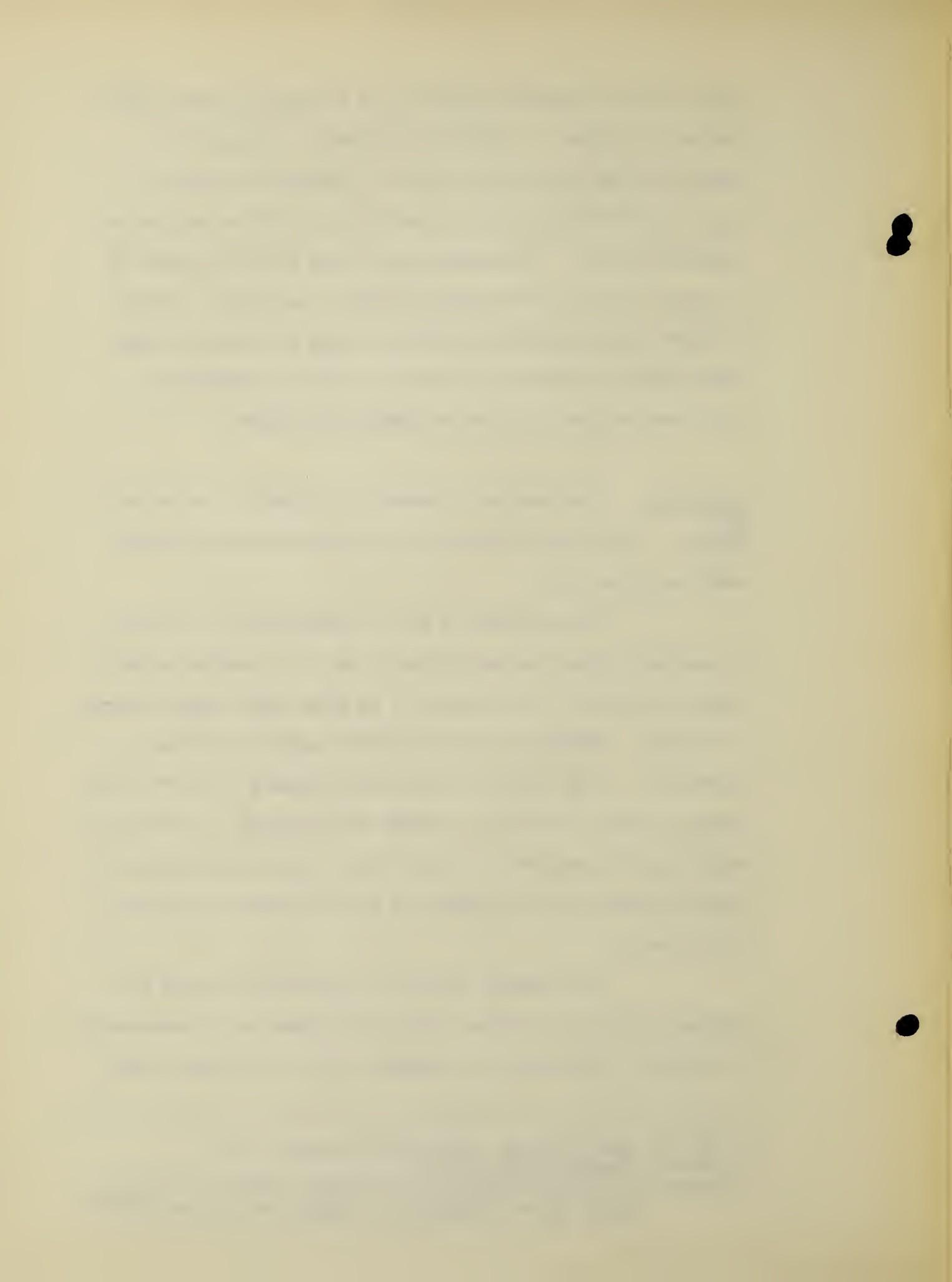
Do not believe a law, an institution, or a custom is good just because the world teaches you it is, was their position, but examine it and find out if it seems good to your instinct of goodness. Nothing is of worth merely because it has been a convention. A man must often be a non-conformist if he will look behind the names and forms of society for realities.³ Life is what avails, not the mere act of having lived; no one is wise enough to judge our duty for us, no matter how many precedents he may prove his advice by.

"The inquiry leads us to that source at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call spontaneity or instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst

1. Emerson, Self-Reliance, Essays (first series, p. 39)

2. Emerson, Journal, March 5, 1833

3. Emerson, R. W., Self-Reliance; and Thoreau, chapters on What I lived for and Conclusion in Walden (pp. 83-103, 336-350)



taneity or instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin."

We live in reality when we utterly disregard what "they" think of us, and spend our days in what our intuitions tell us is our best manner of living, no matter how widely this way may diverge from the beaten tracks which society has worn.¹ It is the test of reality in a man that he gets at things and brings events to pass in his own way.¹

In Emerson's life his opinion was given expression in his resignation from his church and probably in the resolving of more inner conflicts than we may judge of - since a large part of his strength of character lay in his power of resistance to his environment.²

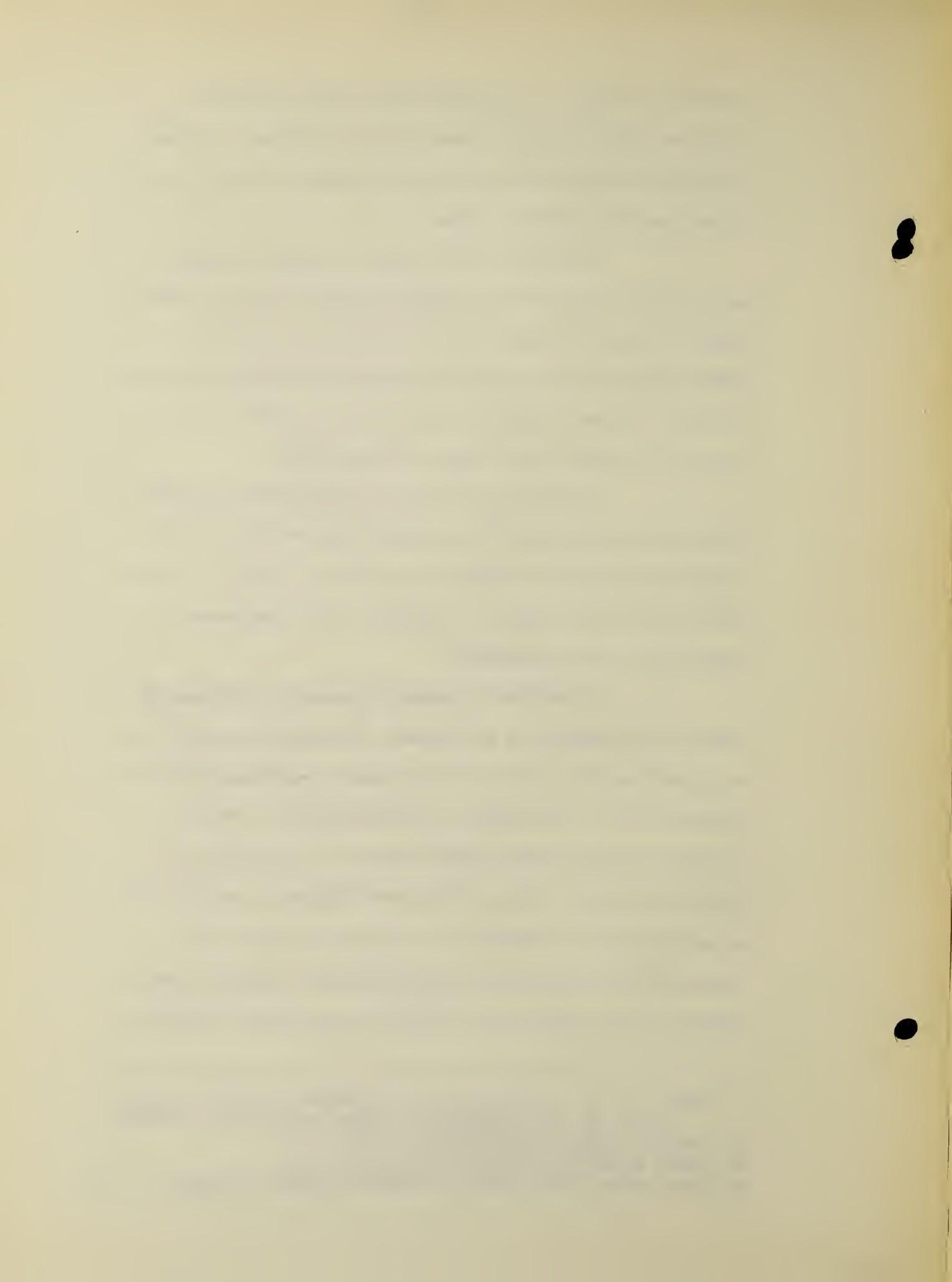
From Ellery Channing's biography of Thoreau we learn that "Through life he (Thoreau) steadily declined trying or pretending to do what he had no means to execute, yet forbore explanations."³ In schooldays he had always had a knack at whittling and was one day asked to make a bow and arrow for a schoolmate of his. Henry refused not deigning to explain that he had no knife.⁴ Something of his boyhood attitude was a characteristic of Thoreau's Walden experiment, the most famous example of his liking to try things out for himself regardless

1. Emerson, R. W., Self-Reliance, and Thoreau, chapters on What I Lived For and Conclusion in Walden (pp. 83-103, 336-350)

2. Woodbury, Ralph Waldo Emerson (p. 16)

3. Quoted in Sanborn, Henry D. Thoreau (p. 50)

4. Story quoted from Channing in Sanborn, Henry D. Thoreau (p. 50)



of village opinion as to whether or not he was eccentric or something even more psychopathic.

The views of Emerson and Thoreau concerning conformity are natural sequences of their opinions on convention. Conformity did not exist in their vocabulary as a virtue or a vice. If society had made a law which seemed true to the philosopher's own nature, he would conform; if it seemed to lack significance for his intuition of worth, he was a non-conformist. Conformity as convention was not to be lauded or condemned for its name sake.

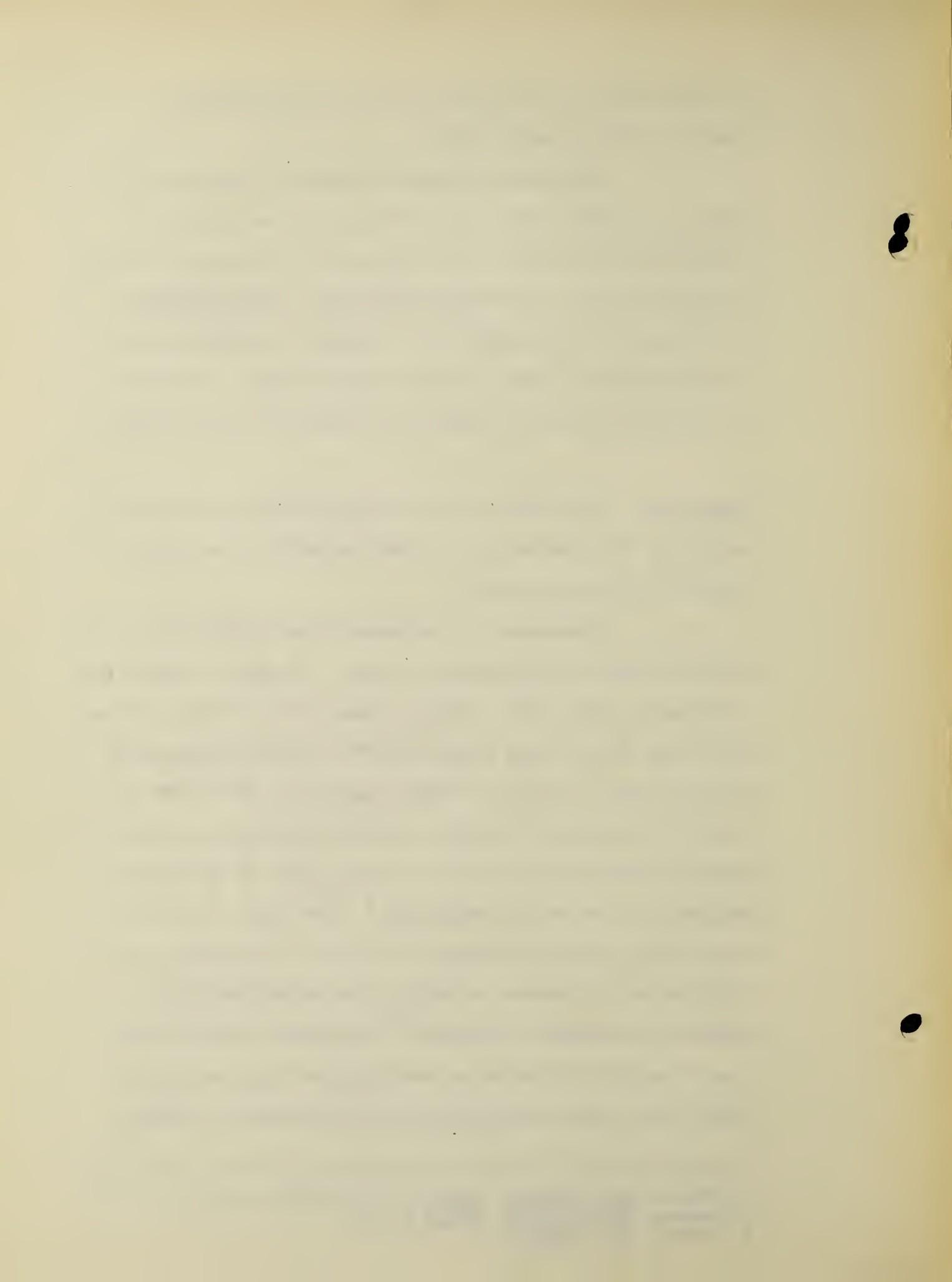
Consistency. The ideas of the two philosophers upon the worth of consistency follow naturally from their estimate of the value of Convention and Public Opinion:

"Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds"¹ it can have no part in our dealing with life. We must be true to the intuition of today as the revelation comes of what is right for us, even though our act today should radically contradict the opinion we upheld before a circle of friends yesterday.² If we live so, our lives of seeming criss-cross contradictions will in retrospect seem to us harmonious since there is a Divine Law in the universe with which our intuitions communicate.² Great souls, therefore, have no room in their vocabulary for the idea of consistency; it should be made ridiculous, revealed as the rationalization of mediocrity and squalid contentment.³ Act always upon your conception of reality with the serene assurance that truth is always, though often beyond our narrow vision of the present at harmony

1. Emerson, Self-Reliance, Essays, (first series, p. 47)

2. Emerson, Self-Reliance, Essays (p. 47)

3. Emerson, Self-Reliance.



with herself.¹

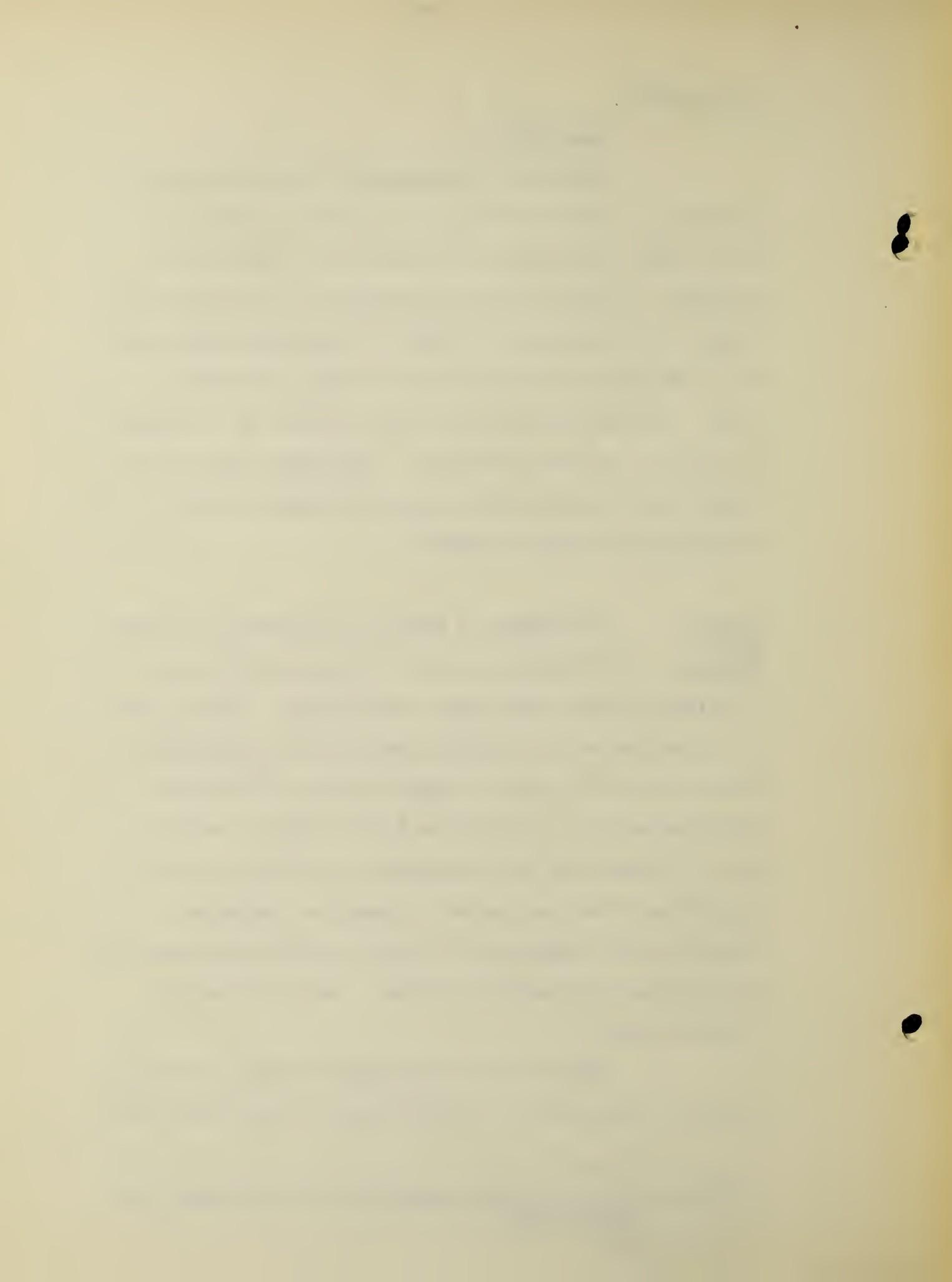
Says Emerson:

"There will be an agreement in whatever variety of actions, so they be each honest and natural in their hour. For one will, the actions will be harmonious, however unlike they seem. These varieties are lost sight of at a little distance, at a little height of thought. One tendency unites them all. The voyage of the best ship is a voyage of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance and it straightens itself to the average tendency. Your genuine action will explain itself, and will explain your other genuine actions. Your conformity explains nothing."²

Society and Solitude. The attitude of Emerson and Thoreau toward Society and Solitude has held the popular interest more, I believe, than any other single idea of theirs. We have liked to picture Emerson on his solitary rambles by the Musketaquid, - Thoreau alone in his cabin by Walden's banks, to some degree misanthropists both, loving nature far more than the company of men. It seems to me that our emphasis is all wrong here, that this loving for solitude was not a primary but a secondary attitude in their chosen way of living, and that misanthropists in any real sense they certainly were not. Let us get back to original sources.

Both men liked to get away from society, neighbors, houses and chimney smoke for solitary tramps in the woods now and

1. Thoreau, The Duty of Civil Disobedience from Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers
2. Self-Reliance



then. It seemed to them that this solitude in nature was a kind of prayer - a wrestling with the angel which reaffirmed to them the divinity of their souls and gave them the inspiration to self-trust again. With Thoreau it was not the fact so much "that we love to be alone, but that we love to soar and when we do soar, the company grows thinner and thinner, till there is none at all. It is either a Sermon on the Mount or a very private ecstacy higher up. Use all the society that will abet you."¹

Some men become intoxicated with gregariousness sooner than others; some men grow stale in solitude sooner than others. To all of us it is the realization and expectation of society which makes solitude of value to us, I think.

With Emerson the great man was he who in the crowd kept with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude² whether his thoughts were being enlarged by friends or his opinion was asked for by a Lyceum. "The sound mind will derive its principles from insight, with ever a purer ascent to the sufficient and absolute right, and will accept society as the natural element in which they are to be applied."³ The truly finished man will never be satisfied with men as they are, however, so great is their and his need for God.⁴ Beyond this in Society and Solitude he says: "There are metals, like potassium and sodium, which, to be kept pure, must be kept under naptha. Such are the talents determined on some specialty which a culminating civilization

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1. Letter to Harrison Blake, Thoreau, Familiar Letters, (p. 305)
F. B. Sanborn, editor.
 2. Emerson, Self-Reliance, Essays, (first series, p. 45)
 3. Society and Solitude
 4. Journal, 1850

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fosters in the heart of great cities and in royal chambers.

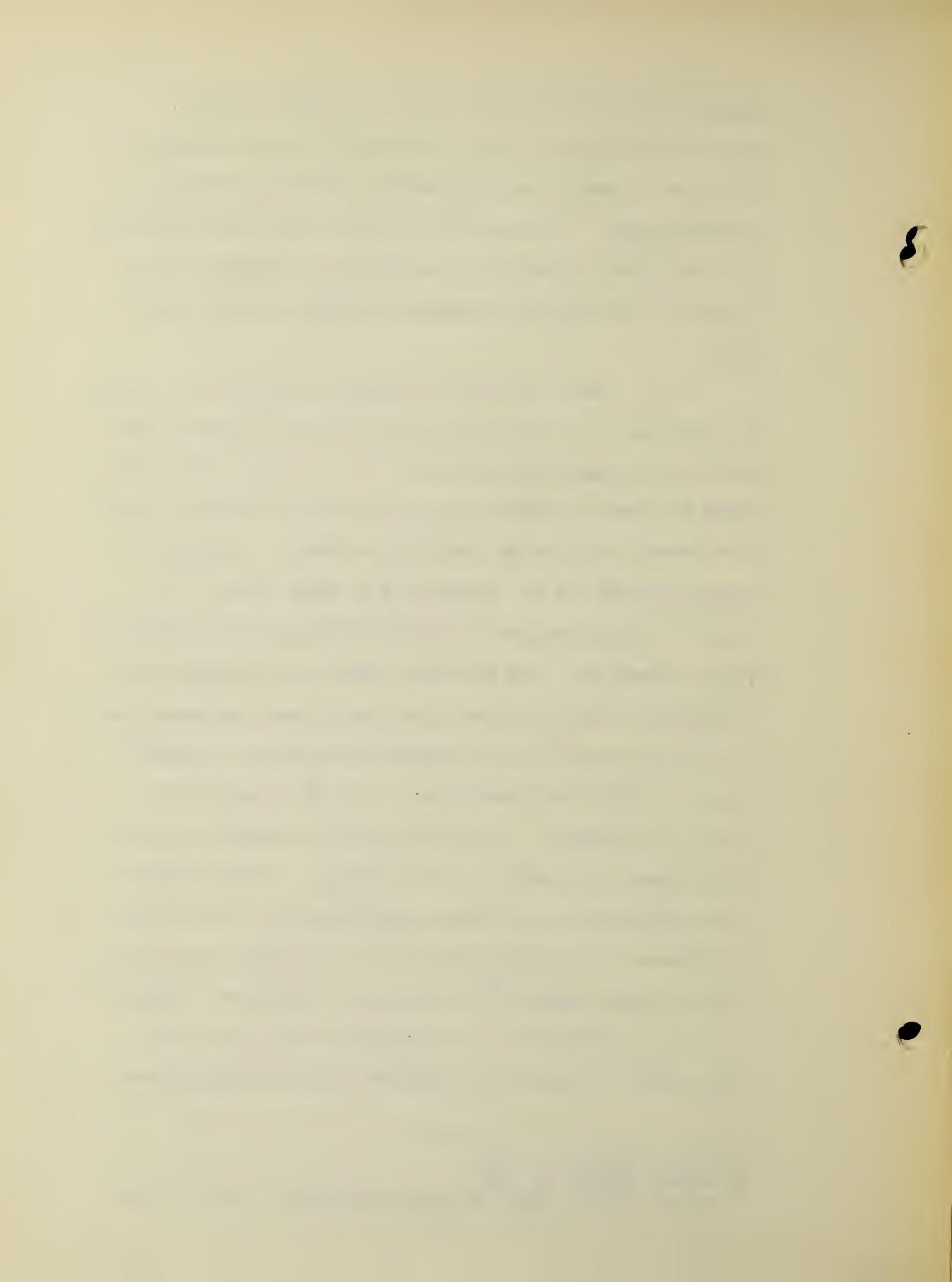
Nature protects her own work. To the culture of the world, an Archimedes, a Newton, is indispensable; so she guards them by a certain aridity. If these had been good fellows, fond of dancing, port, and clubs, we should have no Theory of the Sphere, and no Principia. They had that necessity of isolation which genius feels."

Thoreau needed more solitude than Emerson. To him the great man is he who dwells near the perennial source of life whence all his experiences have found that to issue.¹ This differed with men, but to him it was to be found in nature as it was also largely though not so completely to Emerson. Thoreau's sense of society was not so much that of social contact, - he wished to communicate parts of his life which he would gladly live again to other men,² - but after the communication he was apt to find society dissipating,³ and if he tried to soar the company was apt to grow thinner,³ until at length he was driven to solitude again for further self-experience. He could get less from society than Emerson. In it he was driven to paradox and one-sided argument oftentimes for self-assertion. His own family, a very few friends, not too many acquaintances, and now and then an afternoon with children sufficed him - and it was apt to be a "certain genial weakness"³ which led him to seek these. Society in short was mean and full of compromise for him; it was ever with "infinite yearning and aspiration" that he sought solitude

1. Thoreau, Walden (p. 140)

2. Thoreau, Walden (p. 142)

3. Shepard, editor, Heart of Thoreau's Journals, August 14, 1854



which "deepened the stream of life."¹ In it he grew resolved and strong. Increasingly he sought it.

This difference in emphasis may be explained a good deal, it seems to me, by the temperaments and lives of the two. Emerson developed as a normal social being; Thoreau did not. Emerson travelled more and had wide contacts with people; he married, had three children, and a home which he loved. Thoreau, on the other hand, had had for his sole close companion during most of his boyhood and early manhood, his brother John. It is believed that the two brothers fell in love with the same girl who declined them both.² Within the same year of their disappointment John died in a few days of lock-jaw which followed a trifling cut.²

Thoreau made new friends after that, notably Emerson, Ellery Channing, Harrison Blake, and Daniel Ricketson; and recovered bravely from the shock; but he never married and remained at home for the greater part of his life after that, with his mother and sister Helen.³

There was more inertia in Emerson's temperament than in Thoreau's. Emerson himself called inertia "the bulwark of individualism".⁴ Emerson left society when people wearied him with arguments against his instincts to which he could find no satisfactory (to them) answer, or when "emphatic trifles"⁵ seemed to monopolize his time and scatter his force. In solitude he

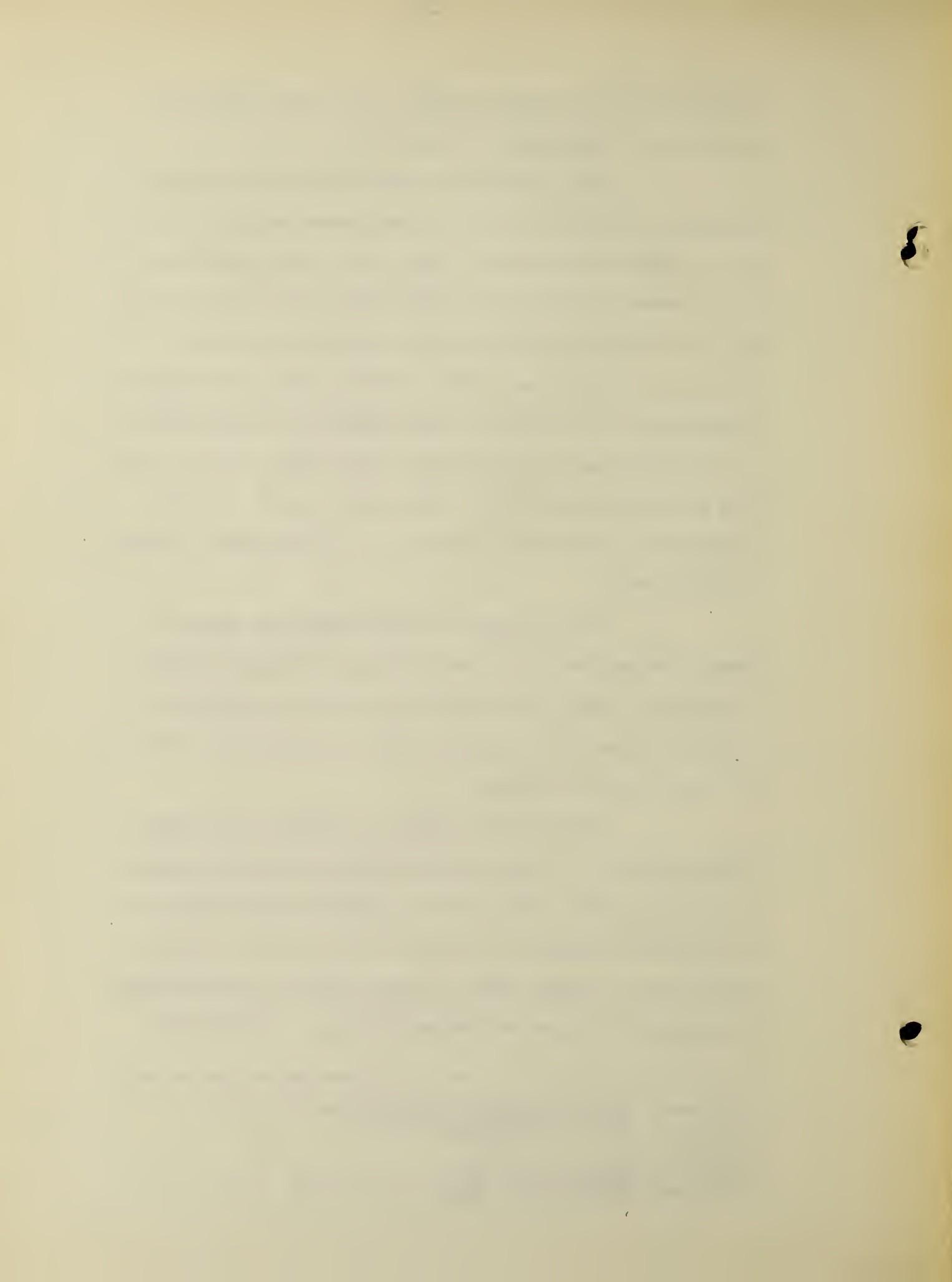
1. Shepard, Heart of Thoreau's Journals, August 14, 1854

2. Emerson, E. W., Henry Thoreau (p. 26)

3. Ibid (p. 27)

4. Emerson, Journal, June 1853

5. Emerson, Self-Reliance, Essays (first series, p. 57)



found clearer distinctions between the primary and subordinate, and returned to society refreshed and stronger, more able to speak his truth in his social relations.

Thoreau was more sensitive to the influences of society than Emerson. His French instinct was to entertain and please. He left social groups because they seemed to him to call all the trivial things in his character to expression, and he feared that if he stayed there he too should become content with this superficial social self, - that he should lose his identity. Society to Thoreau was an inebriation which his deeper instinct warned him against. Into the very strength of overstatement in his criticism of it, we can read its attraction for him. He protests a bit too much to himself against his loneliness, makes a Stoic paean of triumph out of his fate. As Emerson says, he feels himself best in opposition.

Thoreau says, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."¹.....and after two years and four months there,² "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side. . . . The surface of the earth is soft and

1. Thoreau, Walden (p. 93)
2. Ibid (p. 339)

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impressible by the feet of men; and so are the paths which the mind travels."¹ There are not many men who could own themselves so completely for such a length of time in so much solitude, so as not to stagnate there. But it seems that Emerson could find equal if not greater solitude of soul in his library study or in his favorite woodlot, condense its value into a shorter space of time. Thoreau was more the practical individualist, Emerson more the idealist, though none the less individual because of that.

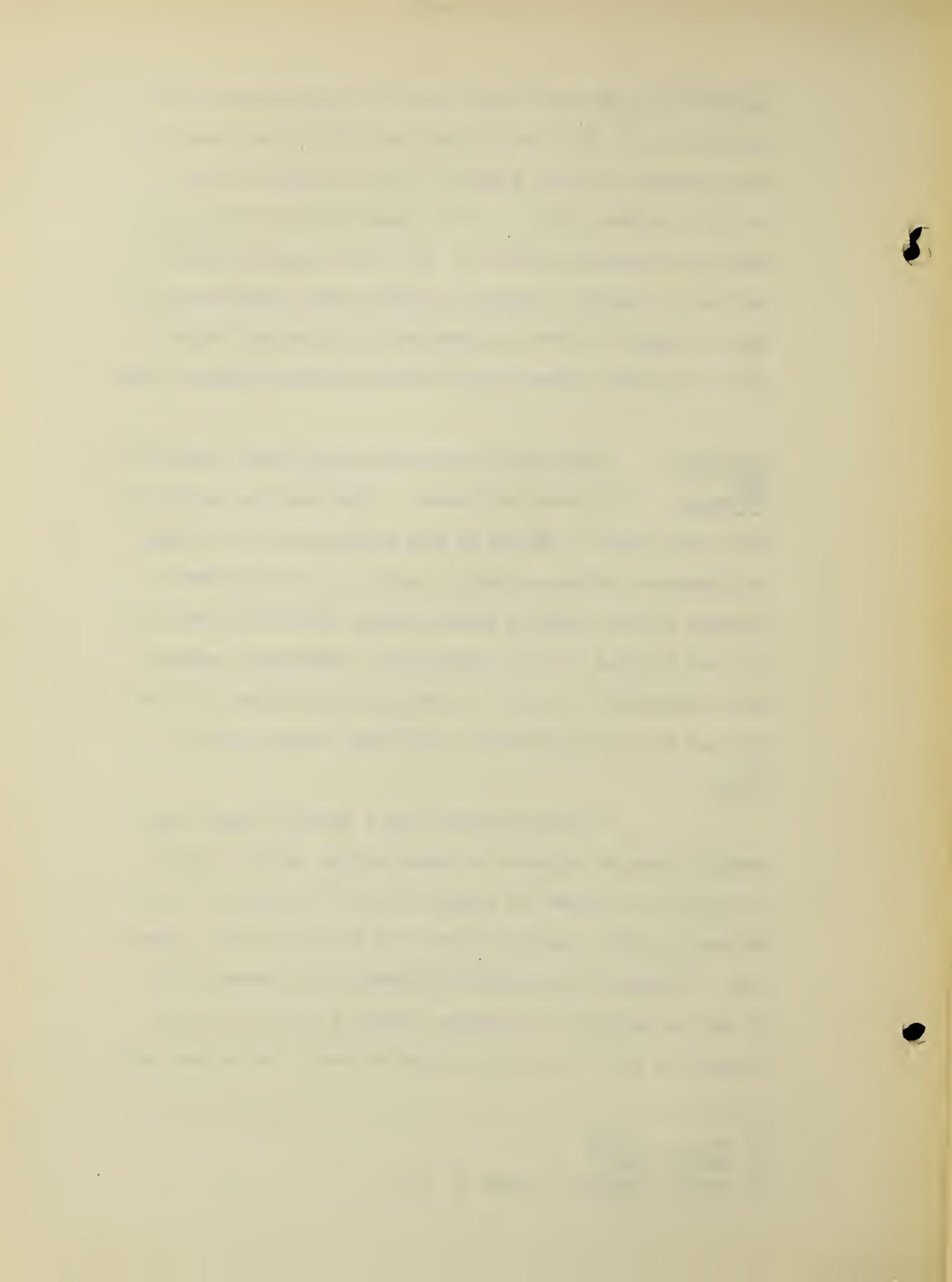
Simplicity and Sincerity. Simplicity and sincerity were primary postulates to Emerson and Thoreau. They were the only steps which truth might be arrived at in a world of social relations. For Thoreau a philosopher was not merely a man who had subtle thoughts and had founded a system, but one who had so loved wisdom that he lived a life of "simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust"¹. It was for a final simplification, "to live deep and suck out the marrow of life"² that Thoreau went to Walden.

To Emerson goodness was a matter of being simple enough to see the relations in things and act on the insight.³ Simplicity to both was the natural in man - the quality of those who acted without compromise from their intuition of the highest law. Sincerity was the natural expression of a simple life. It was the language of philosophy between friends only in its perfection, for it took two to speak the truth, one to speak and

1. Thoreau, Walden (p. 14)

2. Ibid (p. 93)

3. Emerson, Journal, October 23, 1837



one to hear. Perfect sincerity had in it always an element of tenderness. In proportion to our truthfulness and confidence in one another our lives answer our ideal. There is little genuine inter-communication though every man alone is sincere, yet we must believe that a sincere word deep from the secret springs of our instinct is never wholly lost, and act accordingly. Sincerity is the highest compliment we can pay a man¹, and the greatest gift we can give to society.

Laws and Obedience to Them. To an Individualist the state is a means to serve individual ends and society is an artificial device the value of which is to be gauged by its conduciveness to the good of the several associated members, or by some standard set by individuals.²

In Emerson's and Thoreau's attitude toward the worth of laws and a man's obedience to them they were, each in his own way, thorough-going Individualists. There were steps taken by Congress within their lifetimes, upon the worth of which many a good American citizen questioned himself.

In 1838 came the brutal expulsion by military force of several thousand Cherokee Indians from the mountain regions of the Carolinas, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama where gold was discovered around the year 1820.³ Notwithstanding a decision of the Supreme Court upholding the autonomy of the Cherokee nation, the State of Georgia had extended her law over the country and

1. Emerson, Journal, October 29, 1838

2. International Encyclopedia, Definition of Individualist

3. International Encyclopedia (vol. 5, p. 147)

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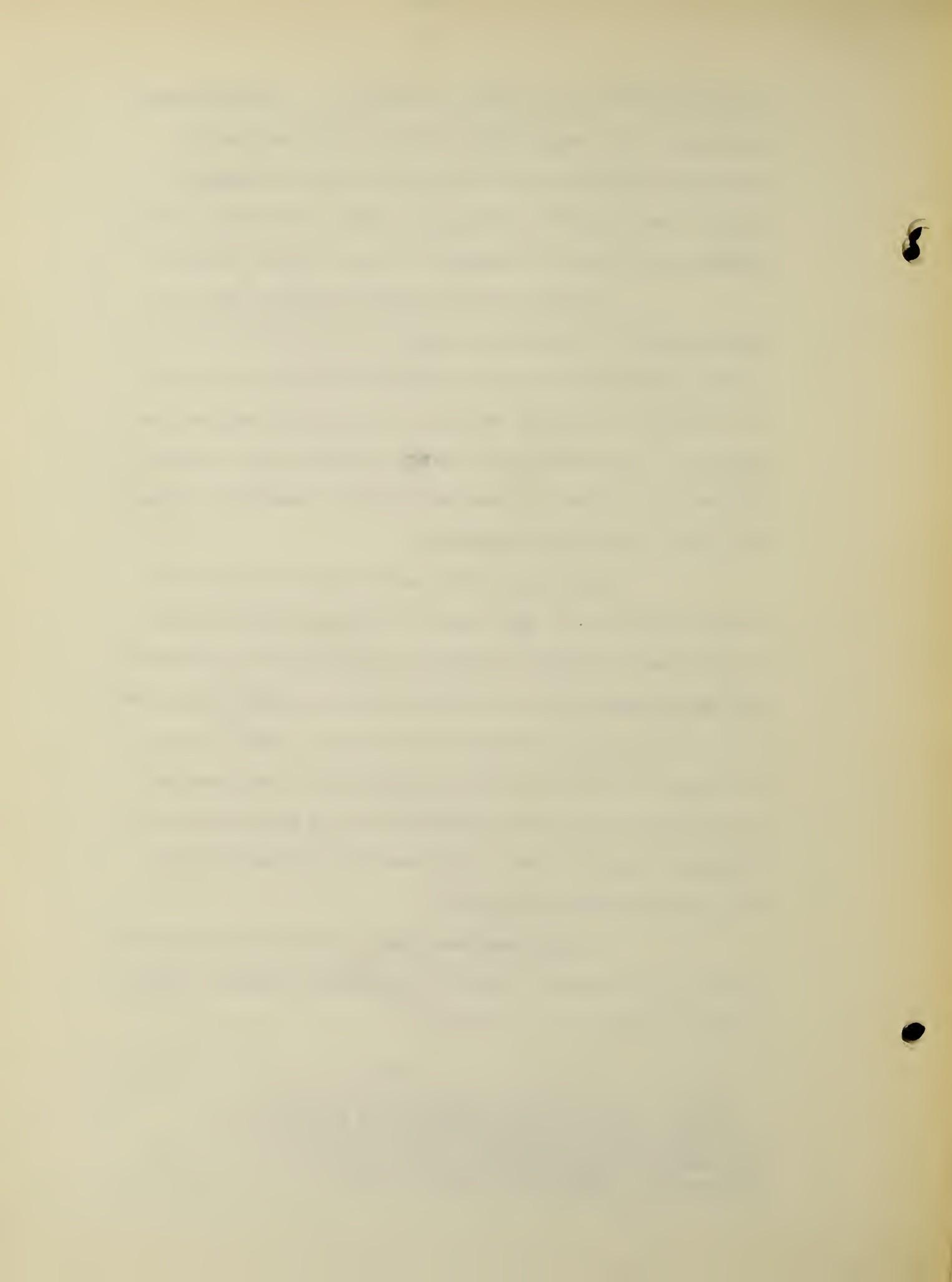
President Jackson had refused to interfere.¹ A treaty had been negotiated with a small faction of the Indians despite the protest of nine tenths of their number, which had bound the tribe to move beyond the Mississippi within three years.² Their repudiation had been the occasion for their removal by force.

In 1846 came the dispute with Mexico over the Texas boundary.³ Through the bullying of the American envoy, Slidell, the threatening of the Mexican coast by our Navy, and the pushing of our wholly deficient claim through Texas to the Mexico Rio Grande, the whole country was precipitated into war by President Polk and Congress who falsely alleged war to exist by the act of the Mexican Republic.¹

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 reinforced the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 (passed to carry out that provision of the constitution which states that persons held to service in one state escaping into another state shall be delivered up upon claim of the person to whom such service may be due.)¹ The enforcement of this law of 1793 had been left to the states and due to growing Abolitionist sentiment had not been enforced in the North.⁴ The new law of 1850 gave the enforcements of the act to United States Officials.²

In 1838 Emerson had been stirred from his philosophic's life to write a letter of remonstrance upon the treatment of the Cherokees to the President.⁵

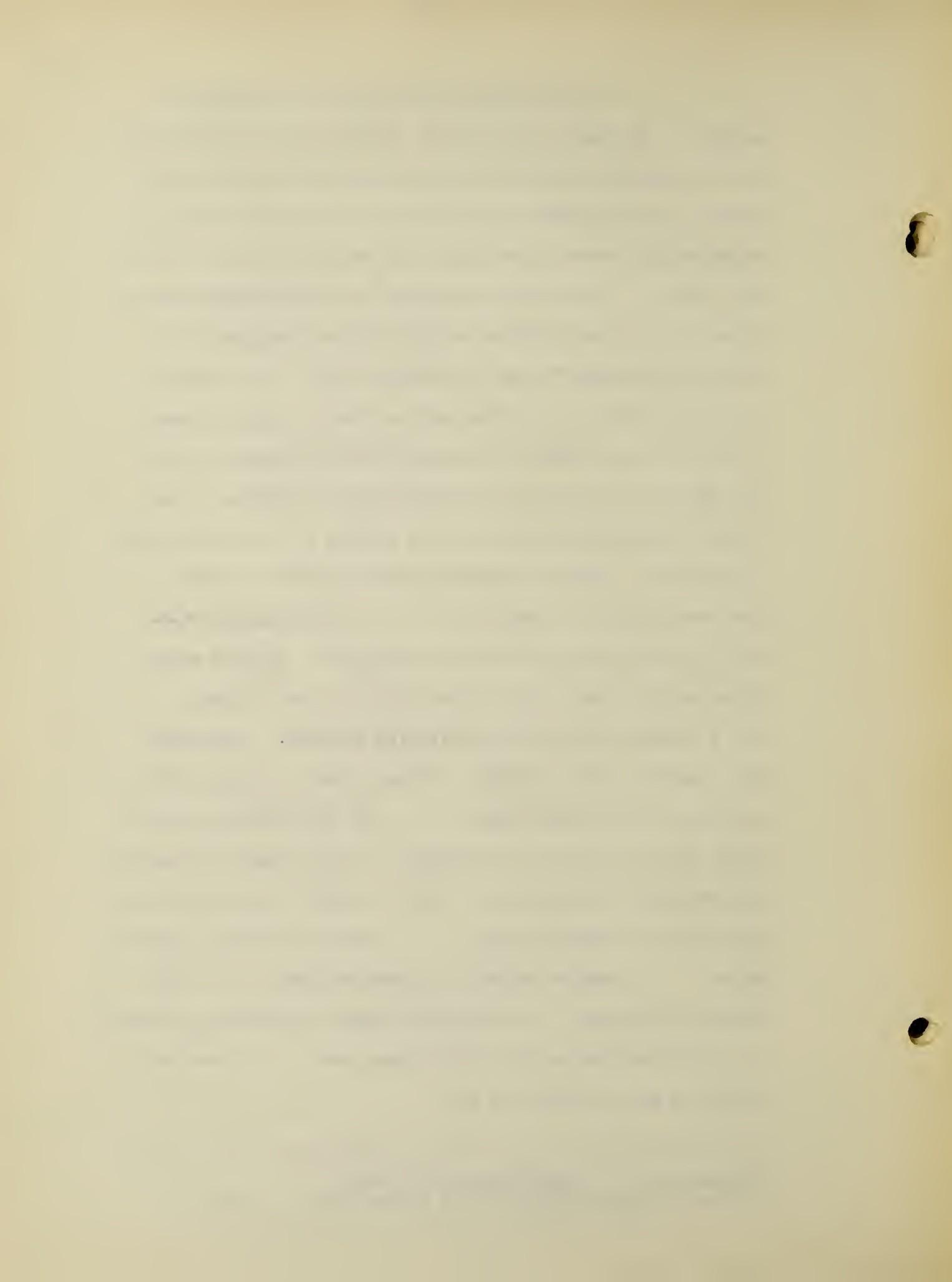
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1. Andrews, United States History (vol. 3, p. 183)
 2. Channing, Short History of the United States (p. 271)
 3. International Encyclopedia (vol. 5, p. 147)
 4. Channing, Short History of the United States (pp. 281-282)
 5. Woodberry, Ralph Waldo Emerson (p. 74)



In 1846 Henry Thoreau made his views upon the subject of the Mexican War known by refusing to pay his poll tax for the invasion of Mexico which slave-power had forced on the country, and was consequently locked up in the Concord jail by a remonstrating constable and jailer who was his very good friend, Sam Staples.¹ After dark the same day of his imprisonment someone whom the jailer's little daughter did not recognize left with her some money "to pay Mr. Thoreau's tax."¹ So, in the morning the rebel was set free only because his jailer refused to keep him and because he did not know who had paid his tax.¹ This was not the sort of thing Emerson would have done. His comment upon Thoreau's action in the journal of May, 1846, shows his attitude. "Don't run amuck against the world. Have a good case to try the question on. . . . As long as the state means you well, do not refuse your pistareen. You have a tottering cause: ninety parts of the pistareen it will spend on what you think also good: ten parts for mischief. You cannot fight heartily for a fraction. But wait until you have a good difference to join issue upon. . . . The Abolitionists ought to resist and go to prison in multitudes on their known and described disagreements from the state. They know where the shoe pinches; have told it a thousand times. . . . But not so for you generalizers. . . . Reserve yourself for your own work. . . . You nothing will content. No government short of monarchy consisting of one king and one subject will appease you. . . . Your true quarrel is with the state of man.

1. Emerson, E. W., Henry Thoreau (pp. 64-65)

2. Channing, Short History of the United States (p. 271)



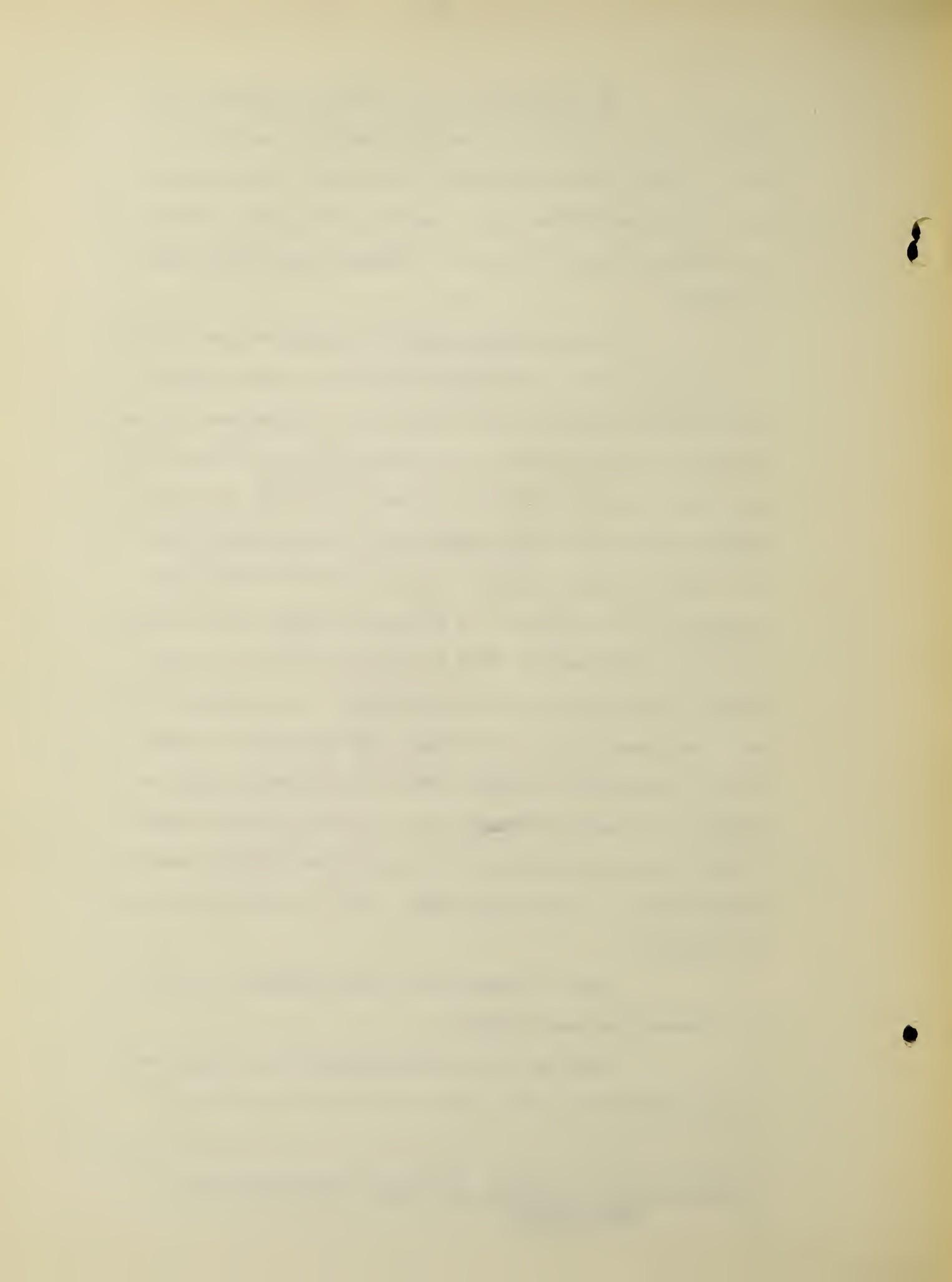
In the particular, it is worth considering that refusing payment of the state tax does not reach the evil so nearly as many other methods within your reach. The state tax does not pay the Mexican War. Your coat, your sugar, your Latin and French and German book does. Yet these you do not scruple at buying."

While admittedly Thoreau's protest was not that of a logician, an act of civic courage such as his often arouses public opinion against an evil sooner and not always more ineffectively than does the slower, more reasoning method of the philosopher; and, what is more to the purpose for my study, shows that Thoreau carried his principle that there is "no necessity for a man's being a tool to perform a deed of which his better nature disapproves"¹, into action. To Emerson the genius came differently saying, "Wait awhile. This is but an incident in a great pattern. More can be done for individuals if you wait until the real issue comes before the country - then you are not to speak to their instincts by radical action which oftentimes has only the impression of passing curiosity upon them, but you are to speak to their higher natures with words whose sincerity shall waken a wider response. This is your task, - that of a philosopher, not of a fanatic."

Again - Thoreau is the more practical individualist, Emerson the purer idealist.

With the issue of the Abolitionists defined anew in the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, both Emerson and Thoreau

1. Thoreau, Plea for Captain John Brown in Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers



disobeyed the law in letter and in spirit. Many were the slaves of the Underground Railway, who were helped through their agency.¹ To the time of the Civil War Emerson spoke even more frequently upon Emancipation than he had since the memorable occasion in August 1, 1884 when he had talked on the same subject in the Concord Town Hall.¹ Then the selectmen would not direct the sexton to ring the bell, so Henry Thoreau had performed that office, and the audience had twice hissed the speaker.² But now the North was turning increasingly abolitionist and Emerson's lectures were received with enthusiasm.

To Thoreau belongs the honor of the first public utterance in behalf of John Brown (the Harper's Ferry leader of a slave-revolt, canonized by the Civil War), when the American press and the average American citizen were abusing and ridiculing the man as a crazy enthusiast.³ Emerson entertained John Brown at his home during the latter's short stay in Concord in 1857 when the captain spoke to a meeting of citizens in the Concord Town Hall.³ The philosopher was evidently thoroughly in sympathy with the Reformer whom he speaks of as the "hero of Kansas"⁴ in his essay on Courage.

In general, the views of Emerson and Thoreau concerning obedience to the law of the state, found in their books, letters, lectures and journals, were these: A great man contains all the government needful to him within himself;⁵ it can make no difference to him what the laws are,⁶ so long as they are not

1. Garnett, Life of Emerson in Representative Men (p. 14)

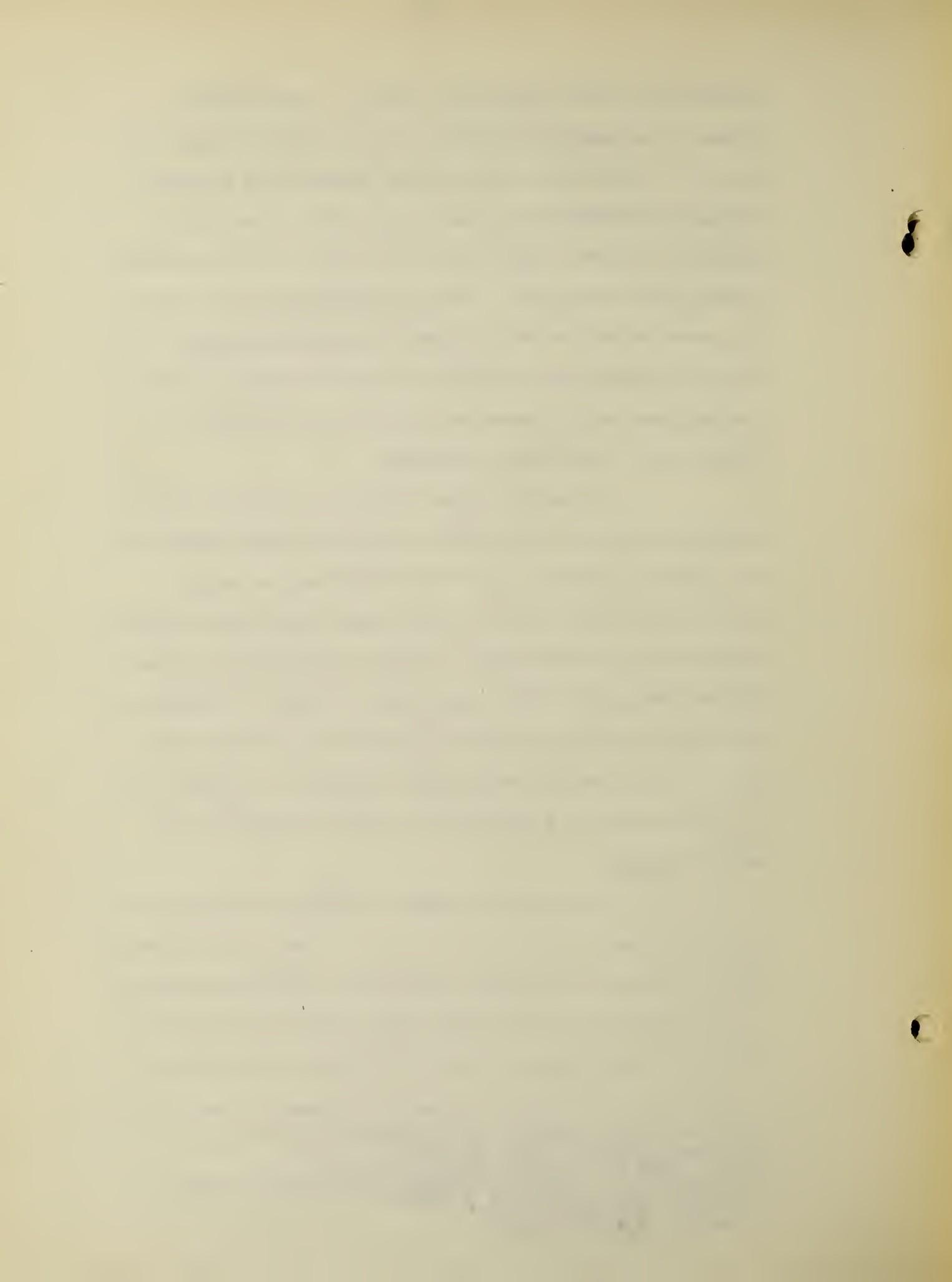
2. Emerson, Journal, August 28, 1863

3. Salt, Life of Henry David Thoreau (p. 198)

4. Emerson, R. W., Courage, in Society and Solitude (p. 216)

5. Emerson, Journal, January 21, 1834

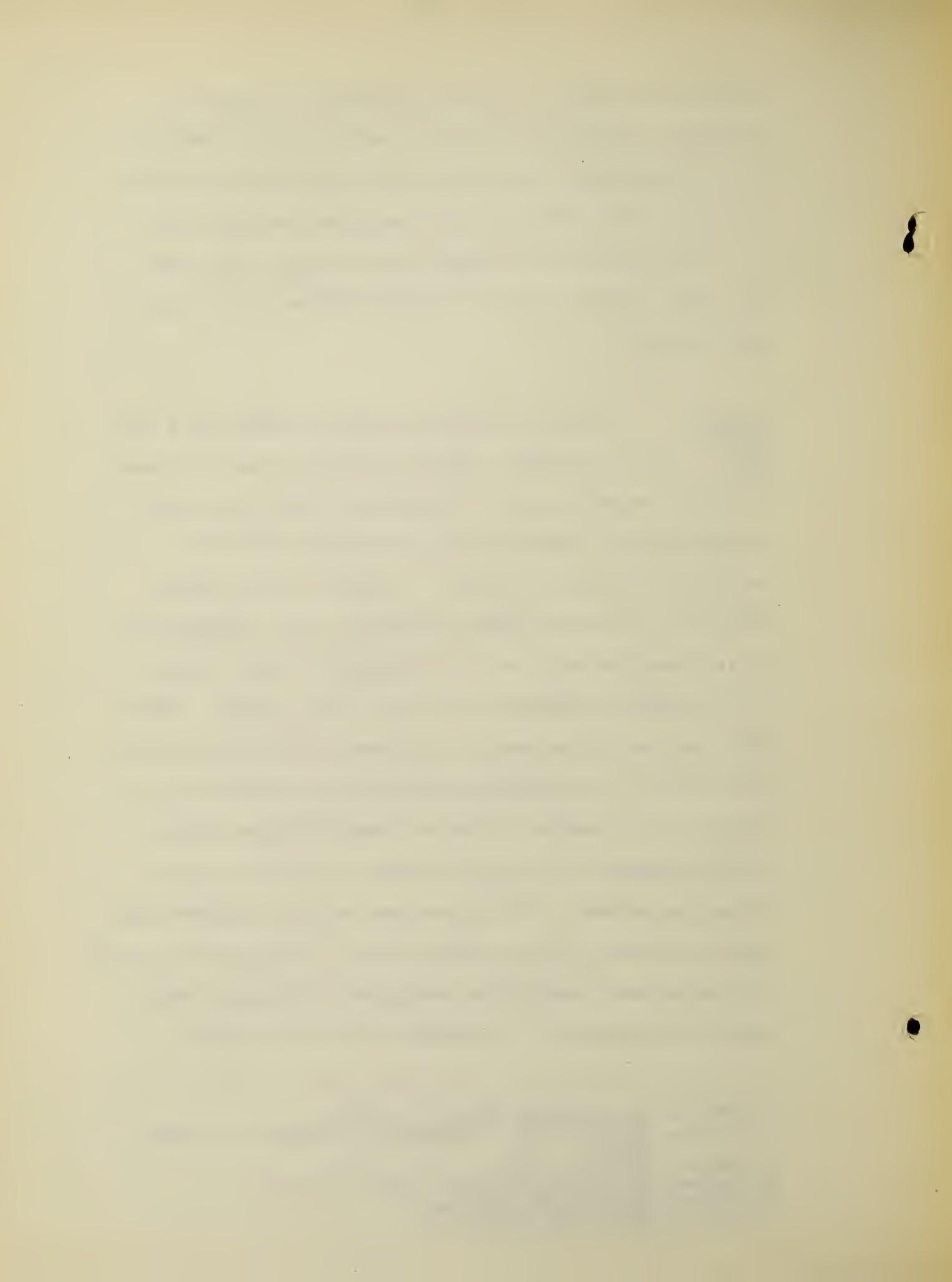
6. Emerson, The Conservative



sacred to his nature.¹ It is not so desirable in society to cultivate a respect for the law as a respect for the right,² - to the right instincts in the citizen, and the laws of the universe are always on the side of the most sensitive,³ Government is at best but an expedient,⁴ and state laws do not make a man a whit more just.³ The only value of political freedom is as a means to moral freedom.⁵

Reforms of the Day. The early and middle nineteenth century was a tumultuous⁶ moil of reforms. When the individual woke to a sense of his own importance, and a transcendental trust in his intuitions, he began to cast his eye about to discover what his patronage could do for the world. A tumult of newly awakened power sought an outlet against instruments of evil, imaginary and real. There was not a man but had a Mission to mend someone else's business, given him by the voice of divine origin. Some there were who decried money and professed to live on the revenues of the spirit.⁴ Vegetarians announced that the world was to be saved by the consumption of bran and pumpkins; others would not eat rice because it was raised by slaves, or wear the leather stolen from animals.⁶ Still others there were who abstained from vegetables whose roots grew downward and all food polluted by fire.⁶ Philanthropists, Phrenologists, Mesmirists, Suffragettes, Swedenborgians, Spiritualists, and Religious revivalists abounded.⁶

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1. Emerson, Self-Reliance, Essays 1, (p. 43)
 2. Thoreau, Duty of Civil Disobedience, Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers
 3. Thoreau, Walden (p. 229)
 4. Emerson, New England Reformers, Essays 1 (p. 184)
 5. Thoreau, Life Without Principle
 6. Brooks, Emerson and Others (p. 47)

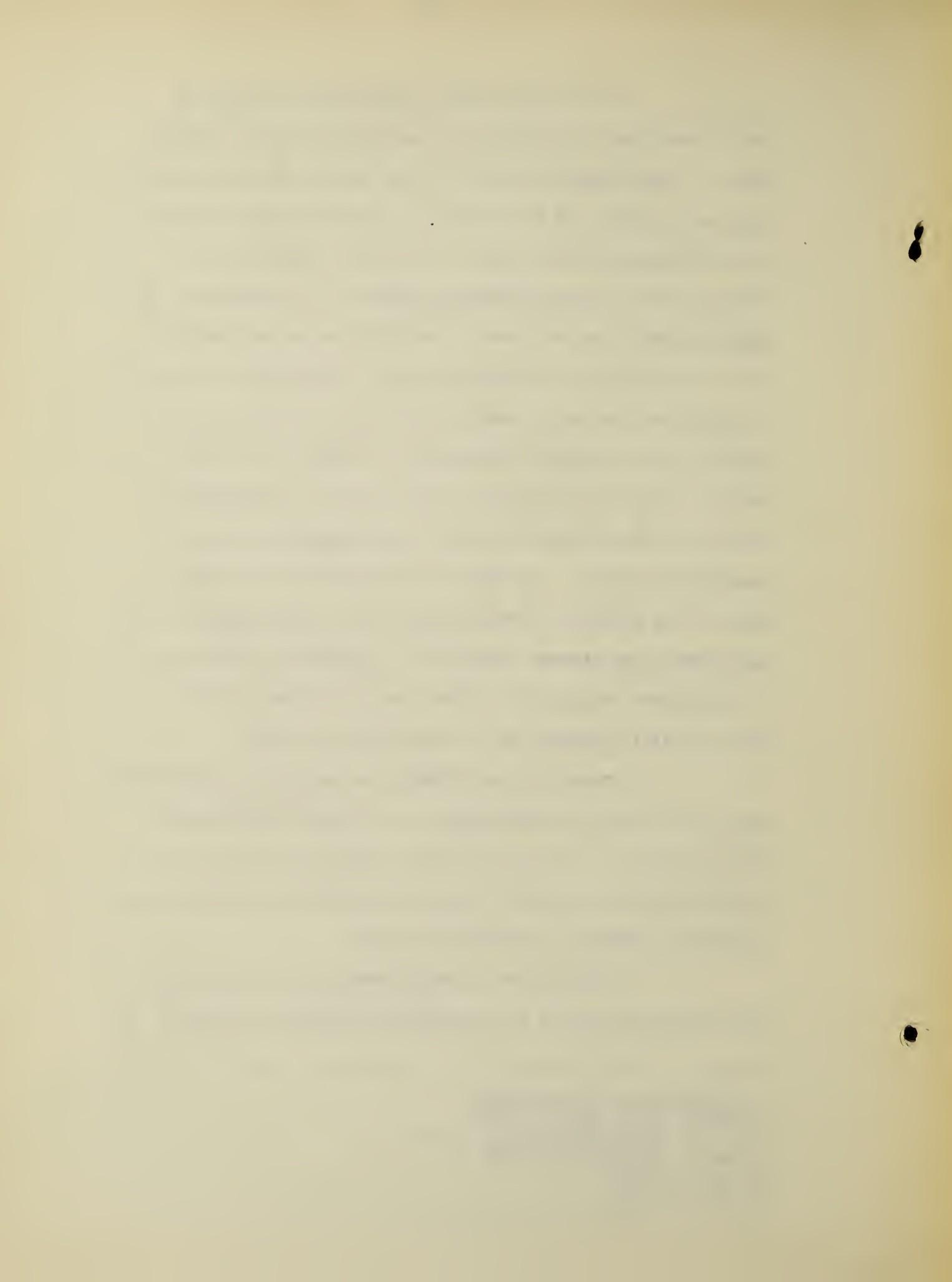


The two most notable experiments in organized social reform were the Brook Farm Community and Alcott's Fruit-lands. Brook Farm (1841-1847) at West Roxbury was a communistic experiment growing out of the social and philosophical movement in the Transcendentalist Club. Mr. and Mrs. George Ripley, Margaret Fuller, Ellery Channing (nephew of W. E. Channing), and Nathaniel Hawthorne, who were in one sense or another members¹ early in the venture, followed the line of instruction laid down for Emile who, you will remember, was "to bow his neck beneath the hard yoke of physical necessity", by laboring an allotted period of time each day either on the Farm or in the Workshop attached to the main institution.² All employments were paid substantially alike. All shared the same food at one table, owned a like portion of the property, and had equal access to its educational and literary advantages.³ The Farm was visited and to some extent influenced by Robert Owen and Arthur Brisbane, English social reformers who visited America in 1845.⁴

Through Arthur Brisbane the doctrines of Fourierism were made alluring to some members of the Brook Farm Community.⁵ Horace Greeley took up the cause with enthusiasm and the Tribunes of 1841-1847 were saturated with the doctrines of Association and Attractive Industry.⁶ (Insert 79A and 79B)

Brisbane was a French Romanticist in spirit, who like his master Fourier he preached the perfection of nature.⁵ As

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1. International Encyclopedia
 2. Swift, Brook Farm (p. 164)
 3. Brooks, Emerson and Others (p. 47)
 4. Swift, Brook Farm (p. 271)
 5. Ibid (p. 272)
 6. Ibid (p. 227)

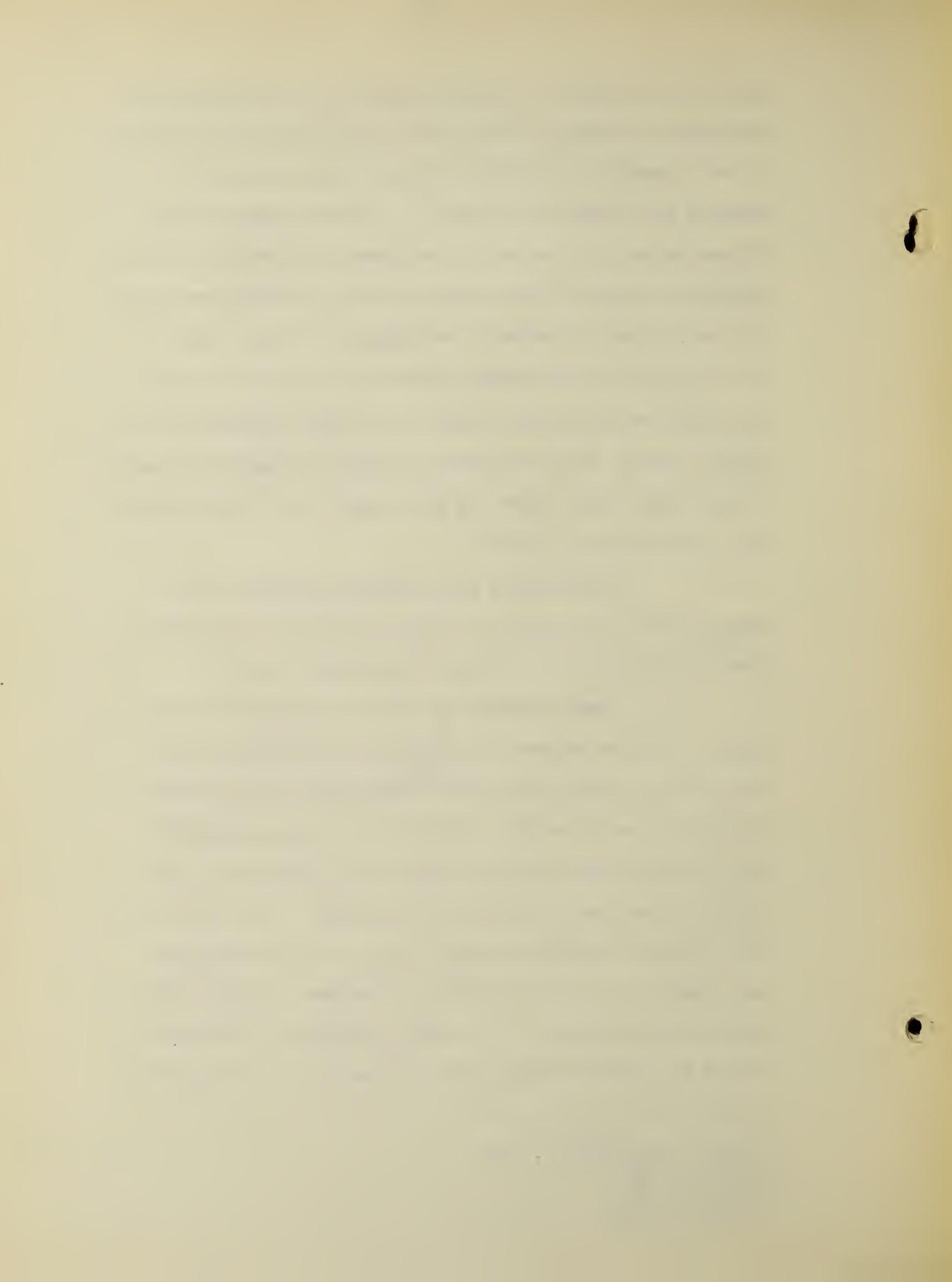


such he was welcomed as a frequent visitor at the farm "with the heartiness so generally shown at that time by each phase of reform to every other".¹ In 1842 the Dial took up his cause and Channing spoke often in his favor.² In 1843 although the Brook Farmers had met with success in the Community organization, some members were eager to test Fourier's theory of "Attractive Industry and Passional Harmonies".³ On January 18, 1844 a second constitution of the Brook Farm Association was issued with the concluding sentence "With a view to the ultimate expansion into a perfect Phalanx, we desire without any delay to organize the three primary departments of labor, namely, Agriculture, Domestic Industry, and the Mechanic Arts."⁴

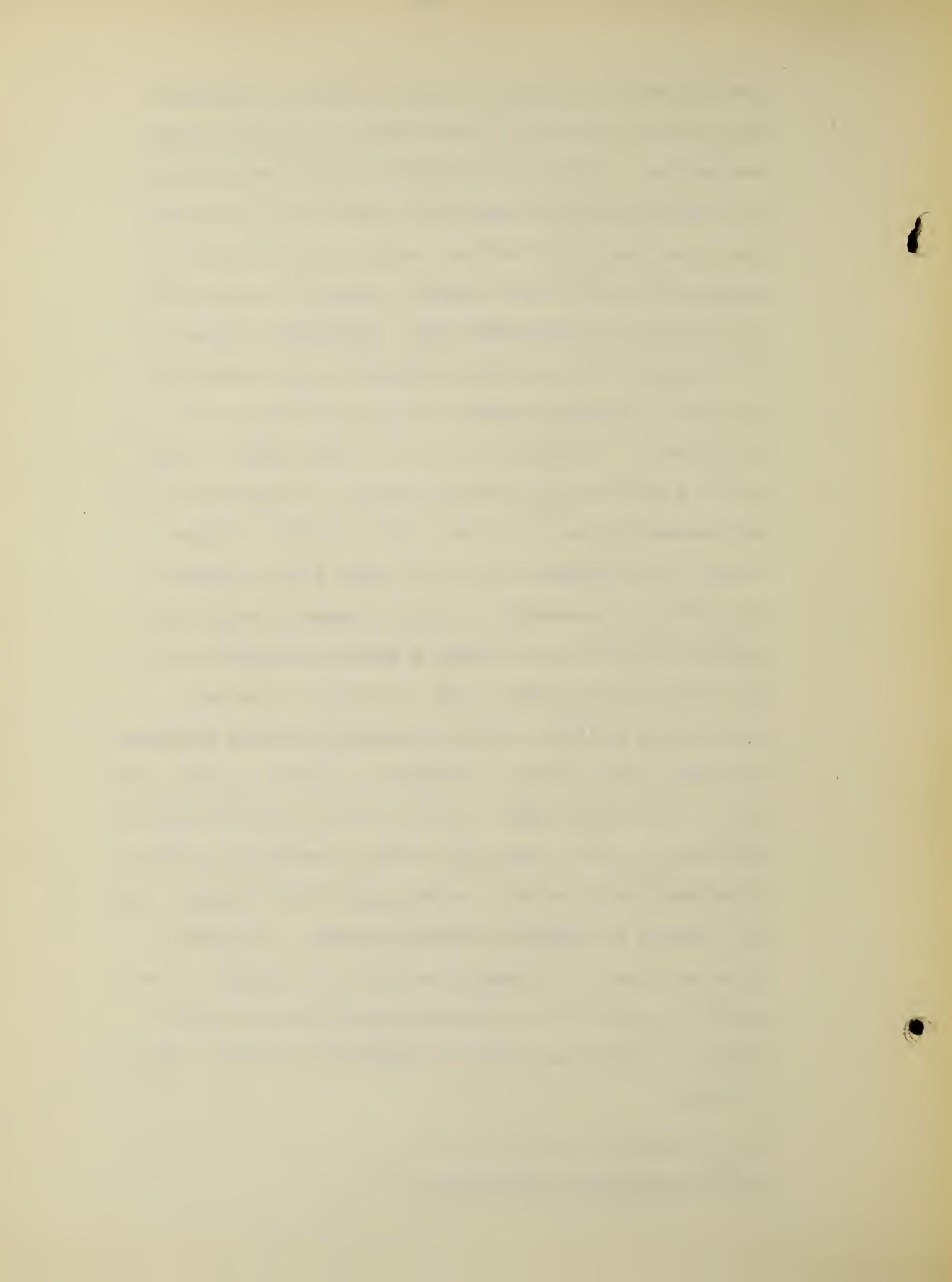
The change in organization was, however, for a reason no one seems exactly to understand, fatal to the further success of Brook Farm.⁴ By 1847 it had ceased to exist.⁴

Fourier believed that man is capable of becoming perfect, that the universe is governed by laws and that man by exercising his reason can discover these laws and apply them to the organization of society. When this has been accomplished evil will be a thing of the past and social harmony will reign. Society at its present stage is in its infancy. The several systems of social organization tried thus far are but experiments each superior to the one preceding,- so we have a gradual development toward perfection. The ideal, as Fourier believed, has not yet been realized because our civilization has been based so

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1. Swift, Brook Farm (p. 272)
 2. Ibid (p. 227)
 3. Ibid (p. 278)
 4. Ibid (p. 279)



far upon the false sciences of ethics, economics, philosophy, and politics instead of the pure sciences - chemistry, physics, mathematics. The social organization which he advocates has its foundation in the passions or desires of man. He numbered twelve passions: five sensitive - seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, and tasting; four affective - amity, love, paternity, and ambition; and three distributive - cabalistic, alternating, and composite. When all these passions are given free play, "passional attraction" causes the spontaneous formation of social groups. The social unit must be large enough to allow for the free operation of combined passions, consisting of about two thousand persons. Each such group or "phalanx" should occupy a single building and provide itself with all desired commodities and amusements. Within the phalanx, groups were organized for particular branches of industry according to the law a passional attraction. Work is therefore a pleasure. Salaries were abolished; each person received an ample minimum and the surplus was distributed according to the amount, capital, and skill of labor contributed; five parts to labor, four to capital, and three to talent. Under this scheme no wasters were expected since "every man is eager to confer benefits upon society". Surplus products were exchanged between phalanxes. Industrial armies were sent out to prepare new lands for occupation. Government, such as it was, was republican with annually elected officers. Lack of any discord presupposed no soldiers, police or criminals.



Fruitlands was Amos Bronson Alcott's experiment in social idealism of 1843, in the town of Harvard, near Concord,¹ "the good Alcott with his long lean face and figure, with his gray worn temples and mild radiant eyes; all bent on saving the world by a return to acorns and the golden age"². Charles Lane, an English reformer friend of Alcott's, had given his magnificent library to the experiment.¹ At Fruitlands no animal food, tea, or coffee was to be had.¹ The bread was of unbolted flour.¹ Louisa Alcott, daughter of the reformer, gives in a Fruitlands diary some samples of the vegetarian wafers used there:³

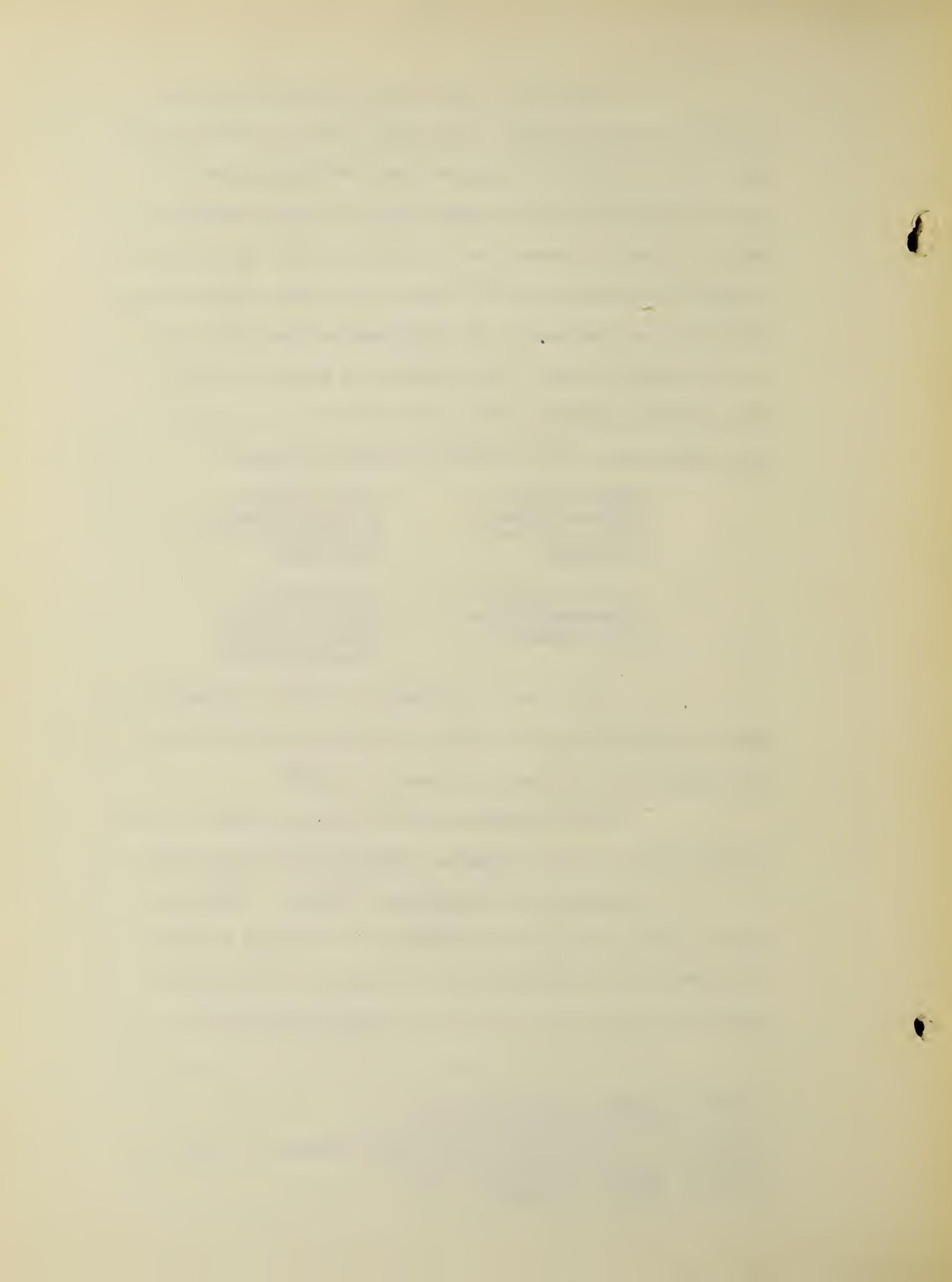
Vegetable Diet and sweet repose.	Pluck your body from the orchard; do not snatch it from the shamble.
Without flesh diet there could be no blood-shedding war.	Apollo eats no flesh and has no beard; his voice is melody itself.

A great deal of emblematic ceremony, supposedly Grecian, was attached to the Alcott children's birthdays, the gathering of harvests, and other domestic events.⁴

Outside the door were two great iron pots, one full of baked beans and one of potatoes, ready for needy passers-by.⁵

Outwardly both experiments failed. Enthusiasm waned at Brook Farm, and the experiment of Fruitlands exhausted Mr. Alcott's resources;⁵ but they are indicative of the experimental turn of mind which one side of Transcendentalism took in

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1. Brooks, Emerson and Others (p. 53)
 2. Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence (vol. 1)
 3. Alcott, L., Life, letters and journals (November 2, 1843)
 4. Brooks, Emerson and Others (p. 55)
 5. Brooks, Emerson and Others (p. 54)



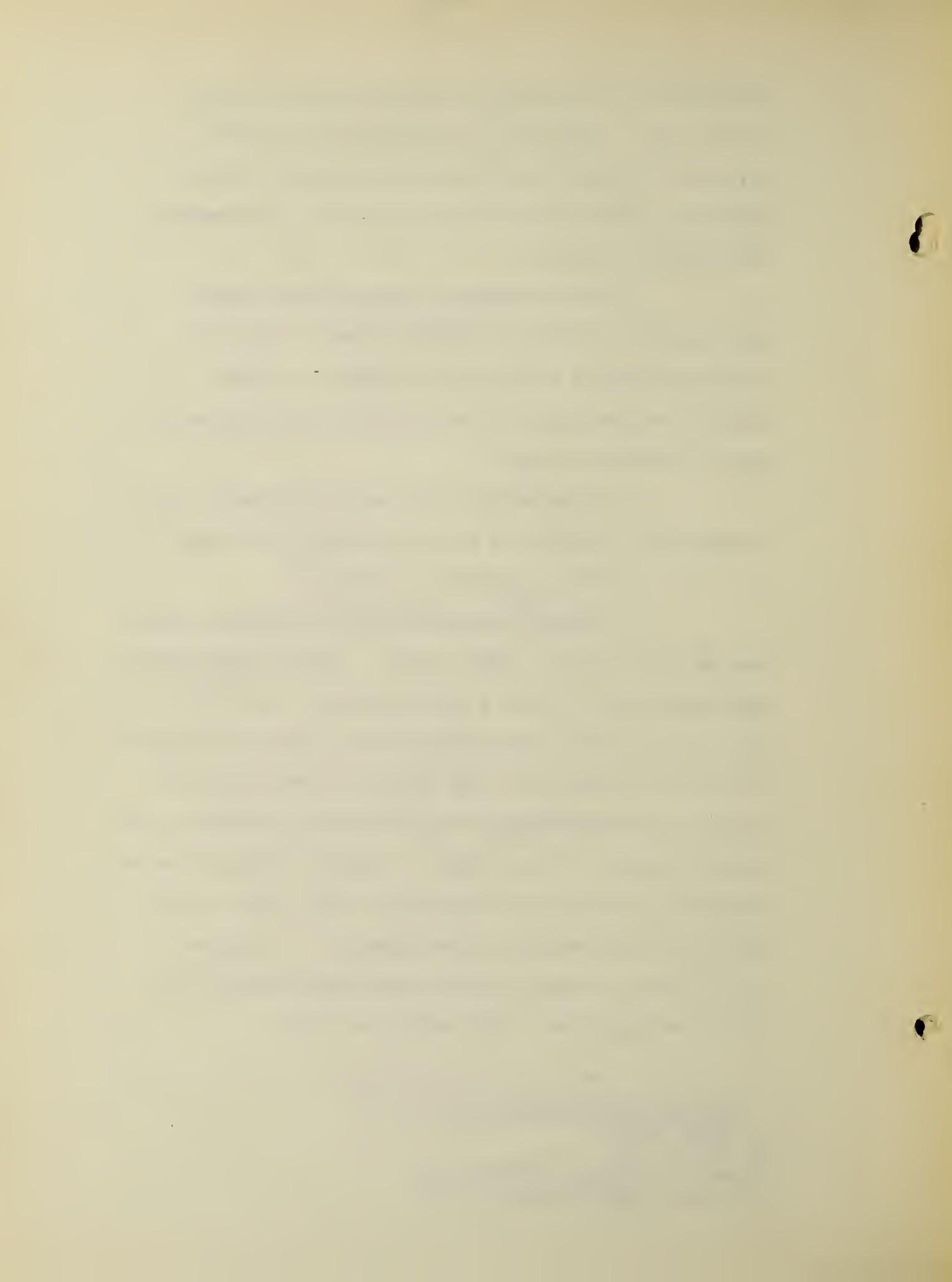
New England, and inspiration to a good many young reformers in those days. About this time Emerson wrote to Carlyle: "We are all a little wild with numberless projects of social reform; not a reading man but has the draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket."¹

Thoreau and Emerson were both too decidedly individualistic to join in community schemes to reform, although they were not entirely out of sympathy with them. Thoreau's own Experiment with Transcendentalism was Walden from which he learned two things:

- (1) "to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely."²
- (2) "we can fulfill our dreams."³

To Emerson, characteristically, Thoreau's freedom here was in the form to a great extent. Emerson's individualism lay beneath form; it was in a "sylvan strength, a united man whose character leads the circumstances and is not led by them".⁴ The Journal of November 17, 1842 declares his stand: "He will instruct and strengthen me who there where he is, unaided in the midst of poverty, toil, and traffic - extricates himself from the corruption of the same and builds on his land a house of peace and benefit, good customs and free thoughts."⁵ An Emerson could do that, but few of us more impressionable mortals - to whom it may nonetheless still serve as an ideal.

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1. Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence (vol. 2)
 2. Walden (p. 73)
 3. Ibid (p. 340)
 4. Emerson, Journal September 1841
 5. Emerson, Journal November 4, 1840



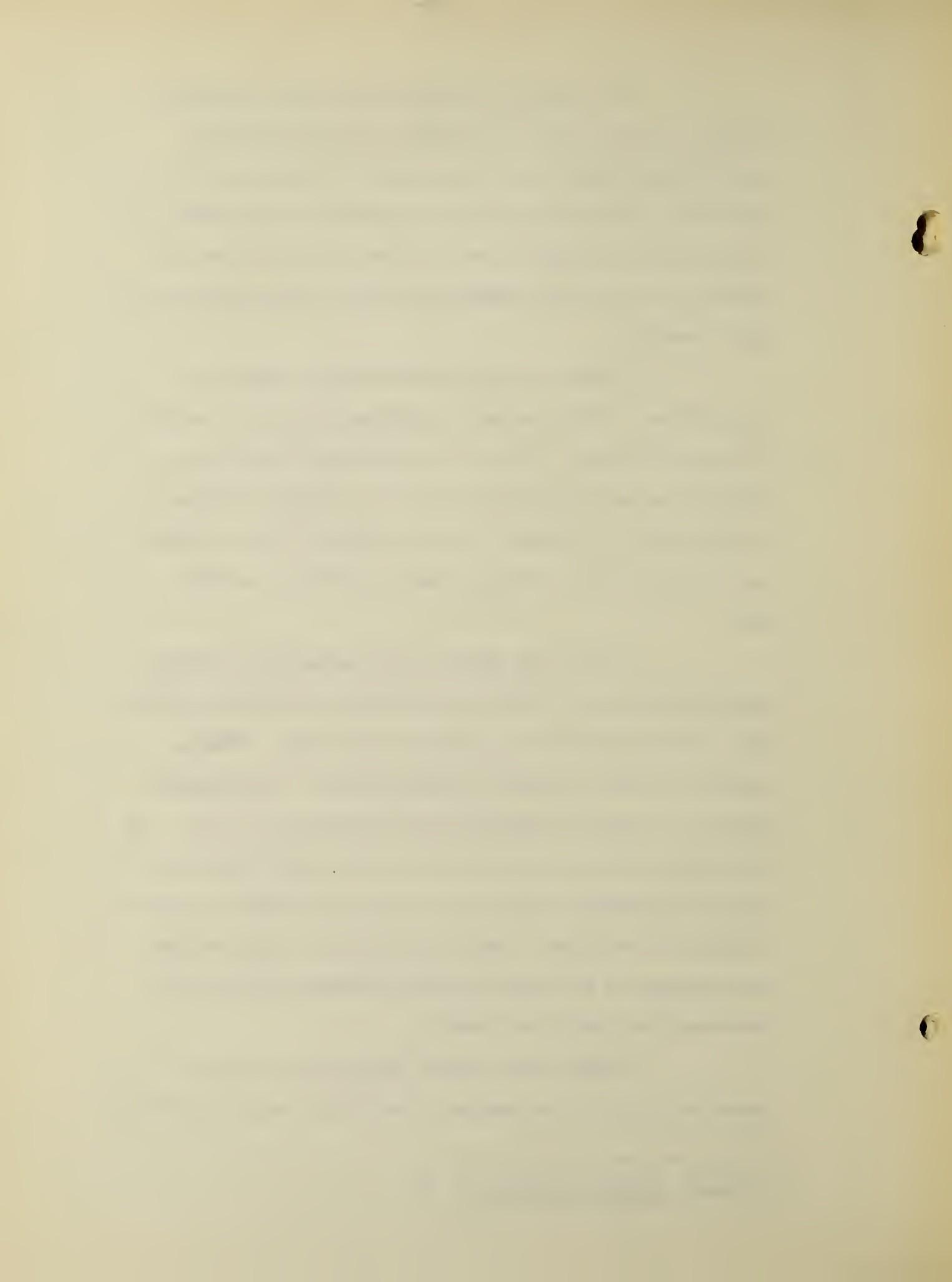
But there is a question in my mind - was Emerson actually less consistent than Thoreau in his Individualism? Didn't he come nearer to his own objective of keeping in the crowd "with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude"? If he could keep his self-reliance in a crowd and lead others to understand that attitude, wasn't his really a bigger practicality than Thoreau's?

Emerson's Individualism was mind conquering circumstance. Thoreau sought surroundings which would conform to his mental states. That is by far the more average type of individualism and is advertised by all the slogans of bravery and consistency. Perhaps it is more practical for the average man, but shouldn't it, ideally, lead to the other, Emerson's kind?

Thoreau and Emerson as philosophers and individualists tried out for themselves the worth of the various reforms which shouted down the street outside their doors. Thoreau reduced his wants to simplest terms at Walden. He had always been more or less of a vegetarian and he grew more so there. He liked going directly to sources for his own commodities as far as possible; at Walden he built his own house, and raised or caught or picked his own food. One by one he tried out any new ideas which appealed to him from the modern platforms of Reform, and determined their worth for himself.

Emerson tried out the manual labor theory with Thoreau as guide, in the years when the latter lived at his house.¹

1. Brooks, Emerson and Others (p. 61)



He had little natural aptitude for it, and a long afternoon of spading in his garden made him unfit for work or thought that evening.¹

Acting on communistic principles he asked his maids to eat at the family table, but they refused.¹

For a time he breakfasted on bread and water and adopted a vegetable diet.¹

To both of them every reform was good when it came from the dictates of a man's genius, but very suspicious when adopted from another.² To each man, his own slowly gained understandings are of most importance to him. So long as he holds to this and speaks from them, well and good. But, he becomes not an individualist but an egoist when he judges his own inner life superior to other men's - so superior for them that he forces it on them incessantly. They are imitations and weak if they will take its worth unexamined.

The Place of Politics in Reform. In the paragraphs upon their views about Laws and Thoreau's attitudes toward Politics as a means to Reform; to develop them more fully:

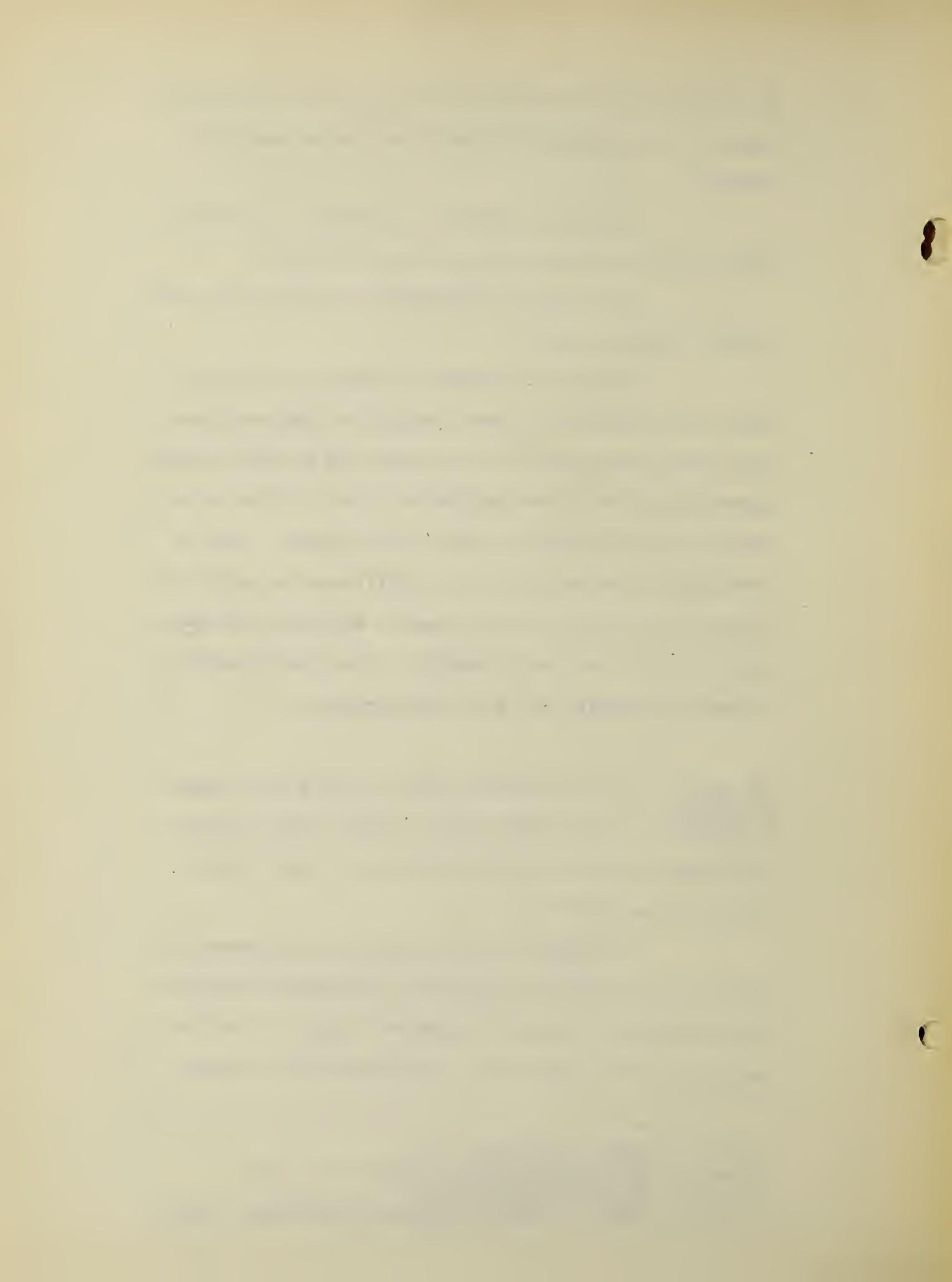
To Thoreau Politics were as the cigar-smoke of a man;³ to one who habitually endeavored to contemplate the true state of things, the political state was "unreal, incredible, insignificant": A mass of men served the state as machines;

1. Brooks, Emerson and Others (p. 61)

2. Emerson, New England Reformers, Essays 2 (p. 183)

3. Thoreau, Walking (from Excursions)

4. Thoreau, Monday, A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers



they were the standing army, the militia, gaolers, and constables.¹ They are commonly thought good citizens, though it is conceivable that wooden men would serve as well. Others serve the state largely with their heads.² Of these are the legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office holders.² Rarely do they make any moral distinctions.² A very few, in the great sense, heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers, and men, serve the state with their consciences also, often necessarily resist it, and are commonly treated as its enemies.² Voting is a kind of gaming, like checkers, necessarily accompanied by betting.³ The obligation to vote never exceeds that of expediency.³ Voting for the right is not really doing anything for it.³ It is only a feeble expression of your desire that it should prevail.³ A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance so openly as to wish it to prevail through the power of the majority, for in the masses of men there is little virtue.³ That government is best which governs least, and finally when men are prepared for it, that government is best which governs not at all. Why doesn't the state encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults and do better than it would have them?³ Action from principle, the perception and performance of right is essentially revolutionary, changing things and relations.³ In short, the only good citizen is an individualist. "If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if

1. Thoreau, Duty of Civil Disobedience

2. Thoreau (a paraphrase from) The Duty of Civil Disobedience
(Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers)

3. Thoreau, Duty of Civil Disobedience (opening paragraph)

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it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. . . . What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn."¹

With Emerson, too, majorities were the argument of fools and the strength of the weak,² while a sect of party was an elegant incognito devised to save a man from the vexation of thinking.³ The good citizen is to remember that every law and usage was a man-made expedient to meet a particular case, and that all laws, as all conventions are alterable and may be made better.⁴

Every actual state is corrupt and a good man will not obey the laws too well.⁴ The state should exist to educate the wise man, and any antidote to the abuse of formal government is the individual.⁴ The good citizens in a state are those who know the foundations of law and politics, and are to the lawyer as the botanist is to the market man.⁴ "The office of America is to liberate, to abolish kingcraft, priestcraft, caste, monopoly, to pull down the gallows, to burn up the bloody statute-book, to take in the immigrant, to open the doors of the sea and the fields of the earth, . . . to make provisional law where statute law is not ready.⁵ This liberation appears (from the individual citizen) in power of invention, the freedom of thinking, and readiness for reforms."⁶

"The American independence! That is a legend.

1. Thoreau, Duty of Civil Disobedience

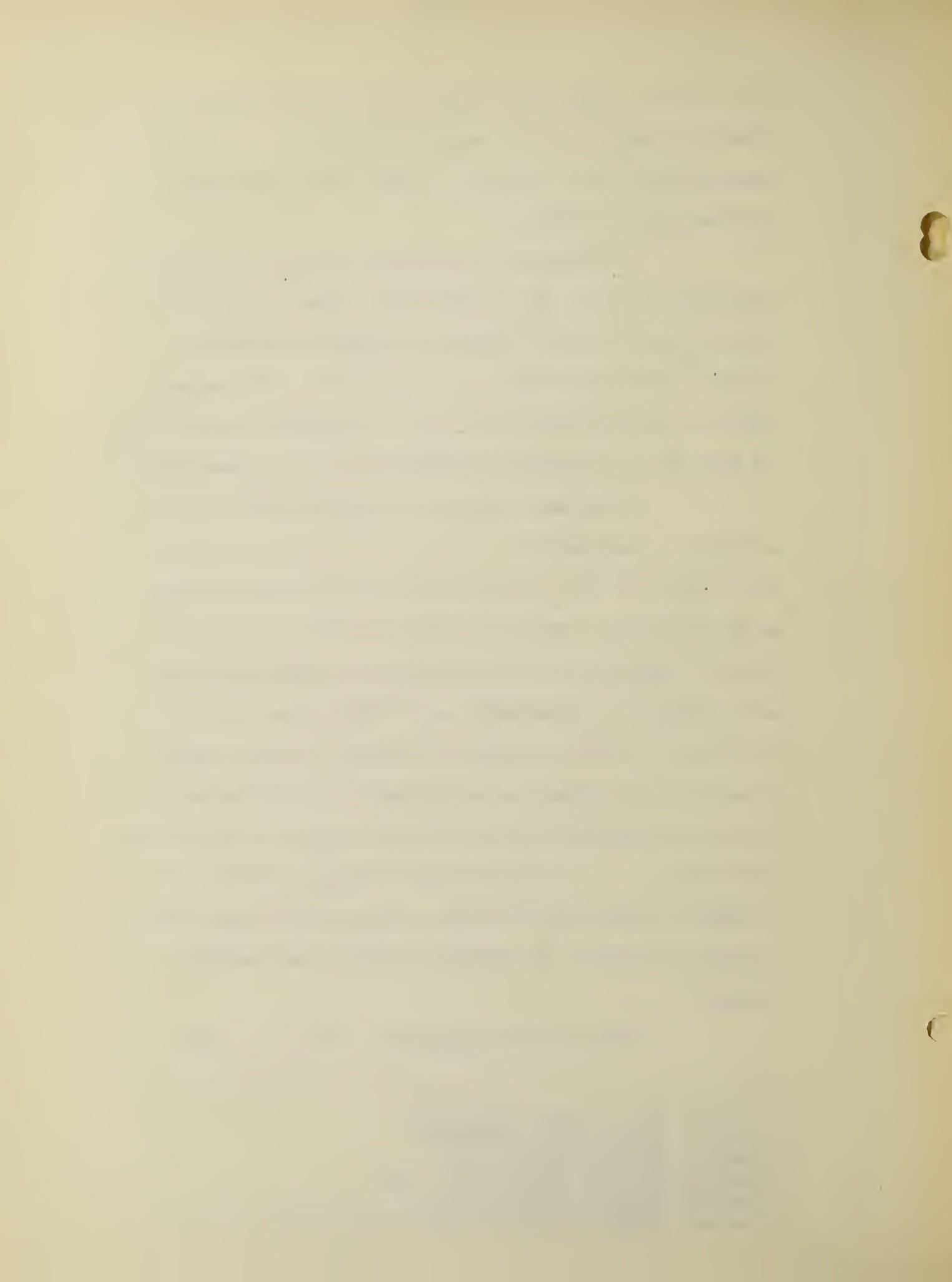
2. Emerson, Journal, March 24, 1846

3. Emerson, Journal, June 20, 1831

4. Emerson, Politics, Essays 2, (p. 145)

5. Emerson, Journal, July 24, 1863

6. Emerson, Journal, February 13, 1867 (parentheses are my own)



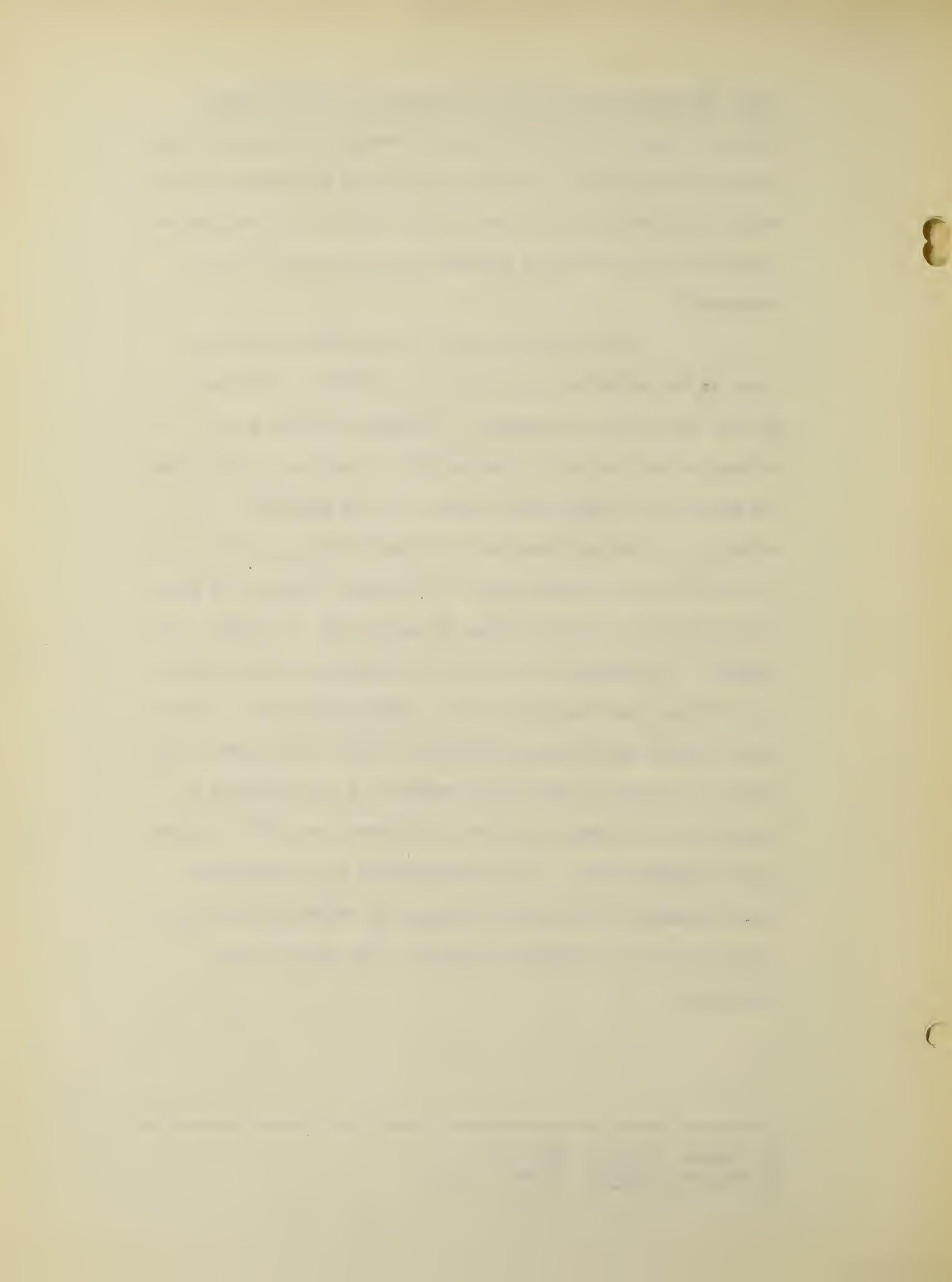
Your independence, that is the question of all the present.

Have you fought out that question and settled it once and again, and once for all in the minds of all persons with whom you have to do, that you and your sense of right and fit and fair are an invincible, indestructible something which is not to be compromised?"¹

In short, the worth of a government was again found in its effect on the life of the individual citizen, and it must grow from his integrity. Emerson's own part as a citizen he felt was not in any particular party of reform group, but rather in a point outside where he could synthesize the values of all the relations he saw around him and express them to those who had a shorter view. The good citizen is to know his own post and stick by that, for he has none to guard it but himself. For Emerson it was this: "I have quite other slaves to free than those negroes, to wit, imprisoned spirits, imprisoned thoughts, far back in the train of man - far retired in the heaven of invention, and which, important to the republic of man, have no watchman, or loves or defender, but I."² In this was his impersonality. He often lectured for abolition or other movements of the day, but always he treated them as particular incidents in a general principle - the worth of the individual.

1. Emerson, Journal, May 1854

2. Emerson, Journal, August 1, 1852

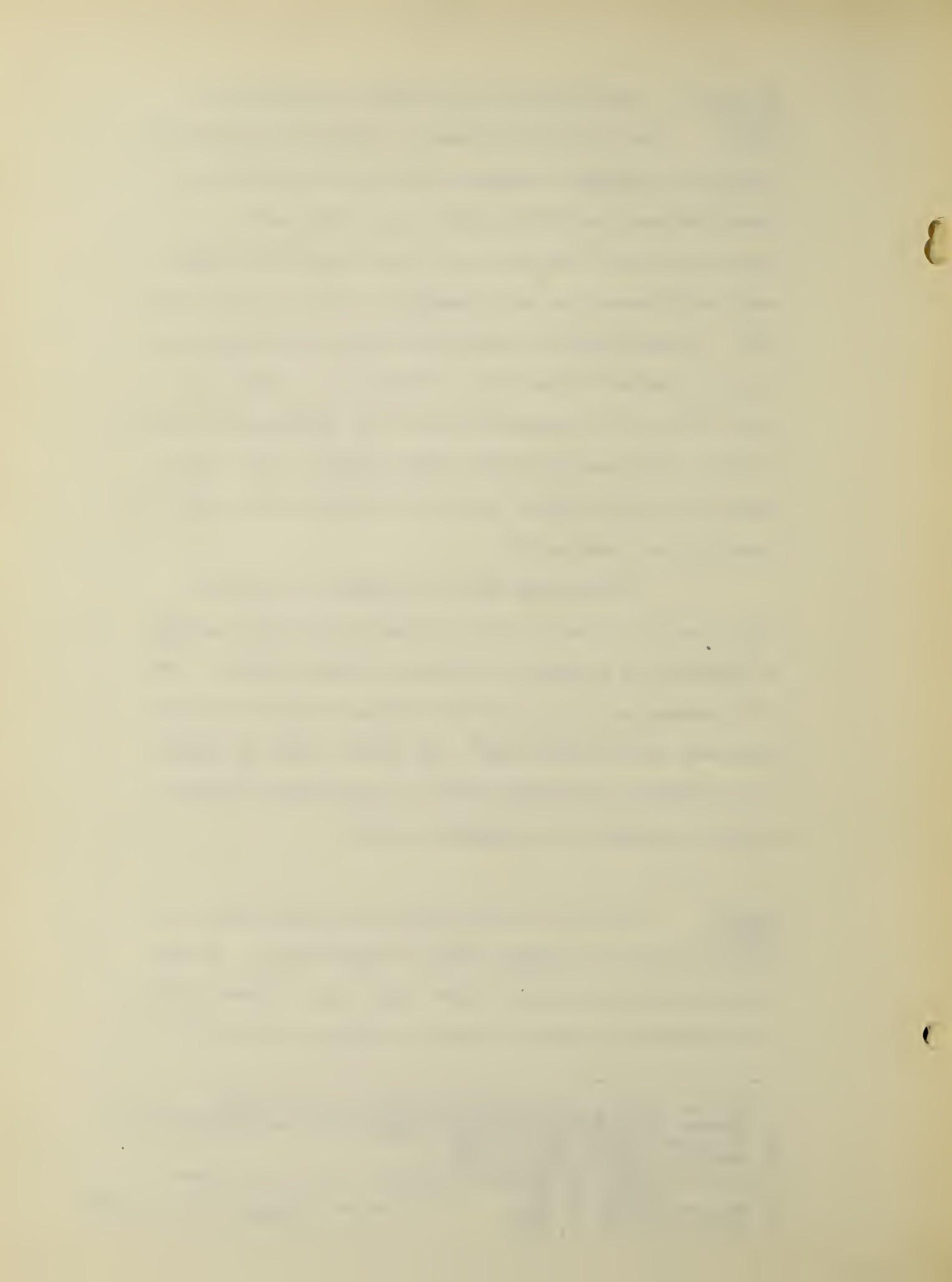


The Place of the Press. Reform spirit in those days was reflected to a great extent by the press. The New York Sun, Herald, Evening Post, Tribune, and Times were begun enthusiastically around 1841-1846, as voices crying in the wilderness.¹ To Emerson and Thoreau they were for the most part gossip sheets, venial and time-serving, which contained no news of vital interest.² The news which they desired was that of the "progress of spirits in matter",³ - that which Emerson says he asked of a friend after a long absence from him - "Has anything become clear to you?"⁴ This news they found almost entirely in Plato, the Bibles of the World, Homer, Plutarch, Montaigne, and a score of other "old and famed books".⁵

Thoreau says the best newspaper in the world would consist of reports of all the learned societies - nothing so provincial as the gossip of Boston or London or Paris. This is for beings who live in that thin stratum in which the events which make the news take place.⁶ For them it fills the world; but philosophers have soared above or dived beneath that plane and cannot remember or be reminded of them.⁷

Social Reform. As for the Social Reform, both men disliked the sort of thing which commonly passes for philanthropy. Thoreau realized what all too few do - that there were a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.⁸ It

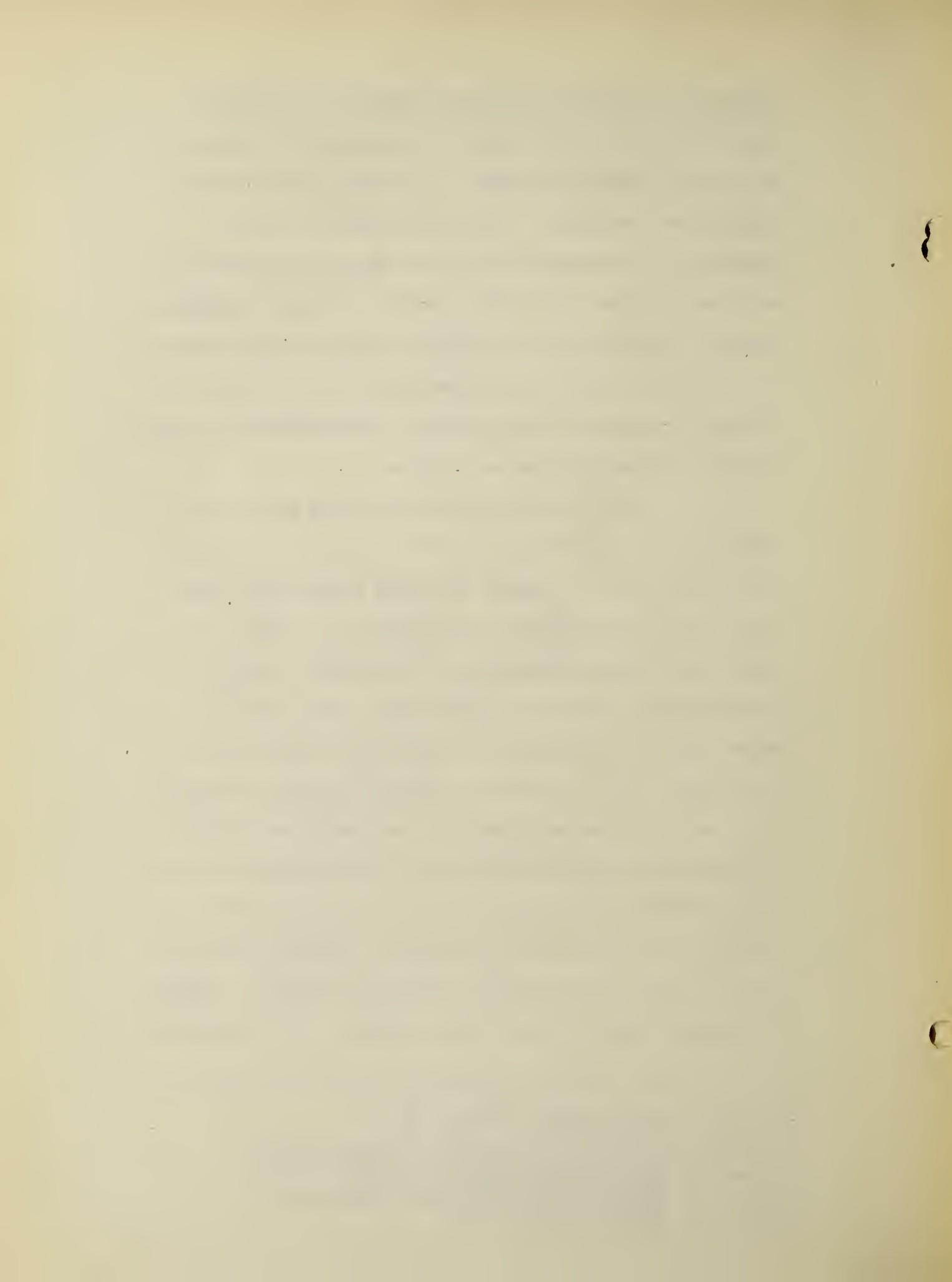
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1. Andrews, History of the United States (vol. 4, p. 69)
 2. Thoreau, Life Without Principle, Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers
 3. Woodberry, Ralph Waldo Emerson (p. 92)
 4. Emerson, Journal, May 24, 1847
 5. Emerson, Books, Society and Solitude (p. 153) and Thoreau, Walden (p. 83)
 6. Thoreau, Walden (p. 114) 7. Thoreau, Journal, April 3, 1853
 8. Thoreau, Walden (p. 78)



pleases our vanity to be known as a benevolent dispenser of food and clothing to the needy, but too seldom do we give ourselves, our courage and health.¹ To Emerson, too, the word sympathy was a misnomer.¹ We surround mankind with the atmosphere of our cast-off griefs, sit down and weep with those who mourn and give them a double portion of disease and despair, instead of imparting truth and health in rough electric shocks and putting them once more in communion with their reason.² We do anyone more good or evil constantly by being what we are than by all the philanthropy men may imagine.

For each man there are his poor, those who by constitutional affinity he is adapted to speak to and give new stuff of life to. To them we owe higher succors than food or fire; we owe them ourselves, our heroism and our faith - a spirit which lends understanding and self-help.³ The true philosopher will depend on his heart, not on his purse.³ To redeem defeat by new thought, by firm action is the work of a divine man.⁴ Let us not waste our dollars on the poor not our poor - who do not belong to us and to whom we do not belong.⁵ "If the man were democratized and made kind and faithful in his heart, the whole sequel would flow easily out and instruct us in what would be the new world;⁶ nor should we always be laying the axe at the root of this vicious institution (saloons). Reformers do not give something for what they take away. If I could lift

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1. Emerson, Self-Reliance, Essays 1 (p. 61)
 2. Ibid (p. 62)
 3. Thoreau, Letter to Harrison Blake, Familiar Letters
 4. Emerson, Self-Reliance, Essays 1 (p. 44)
 5. Emerson, Domestic Life, Society and Solitude (p. 96)
 6. Emerson, Success, Ibid (p. 248)

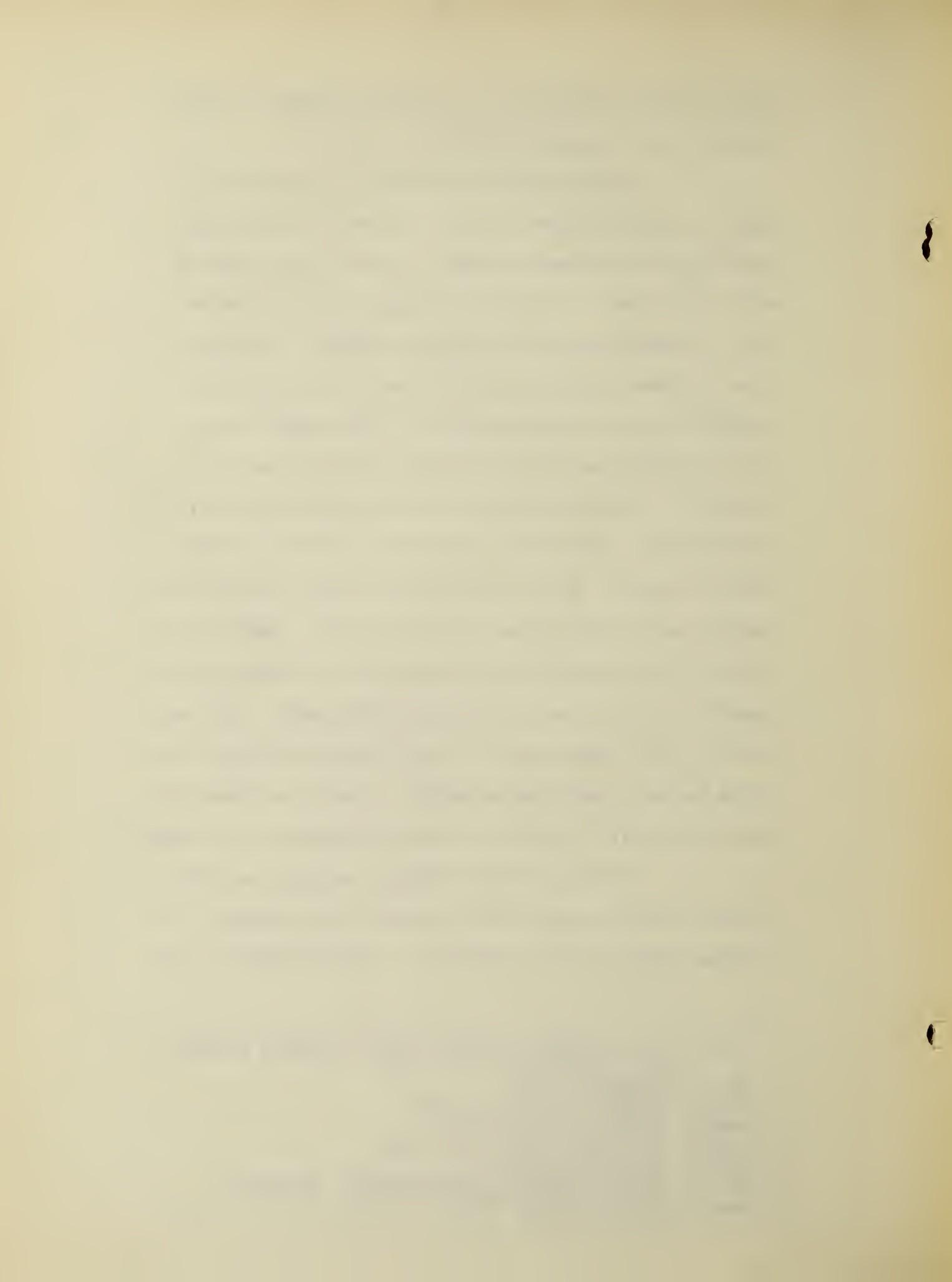


him up by happy violence into a religious beatitude, I should not take away; he would put away."¹

As for social institutions: the education in America of his day seemed to Thoreau to leave off too quickly, when scholars became men and women.² Ideally, real education should begin then.² Our villages should become universities with the older inhabitants as teaching fellows.² A liberal education meant originally and should be still one worthy of freemen³ that is, of individualists. Things taught in colleges and schools are not an education, but the means of an education.⁴ With these means the wise man should set about his own education. God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose.⁵ Every man progresses through a succession of teachers each of whom at one time seems to have a superlative influence, but at length they all pass, and he through insight perceives the means to all knowledge within himself - from work, invention, self-questioning, and after that from intuition, our wisdom increases toward the universal.⁷ One day our facts will flower in truths.⁶ He who can communicate himself, he can teach.⁸

For both of them Religion, more than any form of a social institution, was in the individual life obedience to the ideal revealed through intuition. Sin was failure to live

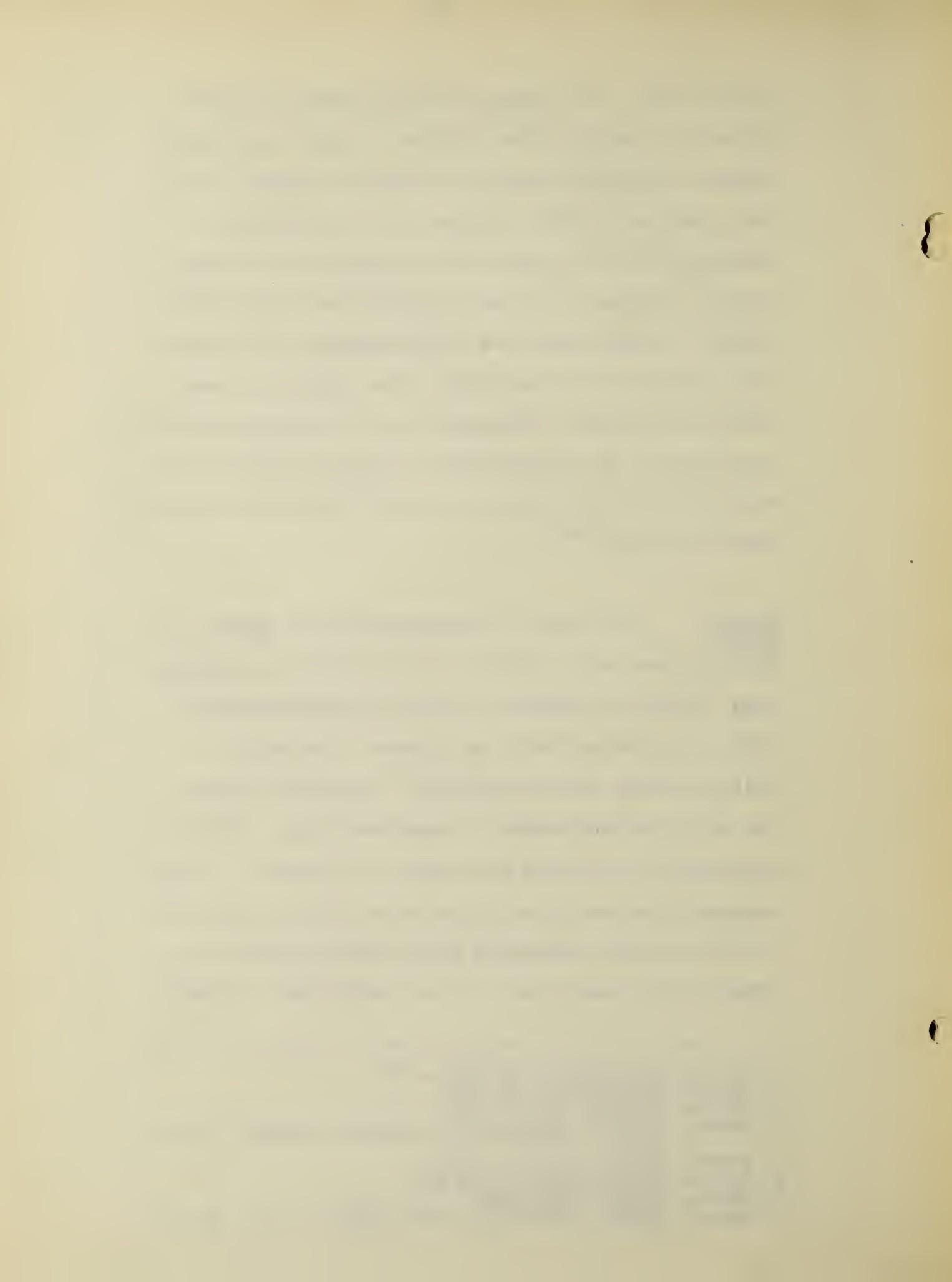
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1. Quoted from the Journal of 1846 by Cabot, Memoirs of Ralph Waldo Emerson (vol. 2, p. 422)
 2. Thoreau, Walden (p. 113)
 3. Thoreau, Journal, December 8, 1859
 4. Emerson, Journal, July 15, 1831
 5. Emerson, Intellect, Essays 1 (p. 248)
 6. Emerson, American Scholar
 7. Thoreau, Natural History of Massachusetts, Excursions
 8. Emerson, Spiritual Laws, Essays 1 (p. 113)



to their ideal.¹ The greatest religious leaders were great because they harkened to the instincts. "Christ preached the greatness of man, but we hear the greatness of Christ."² Man was to make his own Bible by selecting all the words and sentences which in his reading had been blasts of the trumpet for him.³ Thoreau for his own purposes dispensed with a church entirely.⁴ Emerson wished the Church retained for the present state of society, but thought that in the right state, every meeting for practical, intellectual, and civic purposes would be predominated by the same sentiment of holiness for which he asked when he desired the satisfaction of more Sabbath than the eternal Sabbath of action.⁵ and ⁶

Economic Reform. The theory of Economic Reform which Emerson and Thoreau had was again, thoroughly individualistic - and laissez-faire - "there is a tendency in things to right themselves".⁷ Wealth brings its own checks and balances.⁷ The basis of political economy is non-interference.⁷ Legislating meddles with the self-adjusting meter of demand and supply.⁷ Money is representative and follows the fortunes of its owner.⁷ A dollar increases in value with all the genius and virtue of the world.⁷ In a free and just commonwealth money rushes from the idle and imbecile to the industrious, brave and persevering.⁸ An amount

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1. Salt, Life of Henry D. Thoreau (p. 227)
 2. Emerson, Journal, March 5, 1838
 3. Emerson, Journal, July 21, 1836
 4. Thoreau, Letter to Harrison Blake, Familiar Letters (Sanborn, editor)
 5. Emerson, Journal, March 10, 1839
 6. Emerson, Considerations by the Way
 7. Emerson, Wealth, Social Aims
 8. Emerson, Journal, December 10, 1842; Walden (p. 55), Thoreau



of money will go farther if expended by each man and woman for his own wants, and in the feeling that it is their all, than if it is expended by a great Steward.¹ The least hint that a man does not have to depend on himself, relaxes his diligence.¹

For the individual to do something by which he has earned money merely, is for him to have been idle or worse.² A man's expense should be always after his character - for power, not for pleasure.³ He has earned his daily bread truly when he has made some hearty contribution of his energy to the common benefit.³ And it is well for us to remember that our real property consists in the amount of thought we have thought out;⁴ we must have an intellectual property in all property, and in all actions or they are worthless.⁵ What you have learned and done, alone is fruitful in days of debt, depression, and calamity.⁶

Summary of Views on Reform. To both philosophers the best hope of society lay in the progress and gradual perfecting of the individual citizen by his own effort? We must own ourselves first. They did not wish to interfere with the designs of their fellows except indirectly,⁸ by speaking from the truth their own instinct revealed to the intuition of those who would hear them, and so put men in tune with the unconfined original soul.

They wanted men to develop themselves: know the

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1. Emerson, Journal, December 10, 1842; Thoreau, Walden (p. 55)
 2. Thoreau, Life Without Principle from Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers.
 3. Emerson, Man the Reformer - Social Aims
 4. Thoreau, Day Days, Excursions
 5. Emerson, Journal, October 27, 1850
 6. Ibid, April 1847
 7. Woodberry, Ralph Waldo Emerson (p. 71)
 8. Emerson, Journal, May 19

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inspiration of communion with nature, and the genuine worth in simplicity and self-reliance.¹ As for the state - it must never become such a mechanism that it interfered with the free development of the individual.² They were optimists, believing that men were innately good. Love, they believed was the regenerating force; this would infuse heart and courage into the most abject.³ Thoreau says: "love is the wind, the tide, the waves, the sunshine. Its power is incalculable; it is many horse-power. It never ceases, it never slacks; it can move the globe without resting place; it can warm without fire; it can feed without meat; it can clothe without garments; it can shelter without roof; it can make a paradise within, which will dispense with a paradise without. But thought the wisest men in all ages have labored to publish this force,³ and every human heart is sooner or later, more or less made to feel it, yet how little it is actually applied to social ends."⁴

The Ideal Republic. To Emerson the ideal republic was one of wise freedom where sense, simplicity, knowledge, and good meaning abode, the true society wherever there was love and faithful fellow-working.⁵

Thoreau pleased himself with imagining "a state which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it

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1. Emerson, Journal, May 19
 2. Emerson, New England Reformers, Essays (second series)
 3. Emerson, Love, Essays (first series)
 4. Thoreau, Paradise to be Regained from Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers
 5. Emerson, Journal, August 9, 1834

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inconsistent with its own repose, if a few were to live aloof from it, not embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A state which bore this kind of gruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious state¹ - where there would be no need for government.

Conclusion and
Inference about
Individualism.

After all I do not like trying to explain Emerson or Thoreau - as men. One is so apt to limit them to one's powers of explanation. It seems better, in accordance with their own beliefs, to let them stand before us absolutely, - free from any attempts of our own to impale their personalities on a pen-point - personalities are elusive things always - but rather to take from their lives and works that which has meaning for us, letting the rest await our larger understanding.

But the theories of Individualism which they held and which I have given here in part as I have understood them, are quite different matters. I shall try to evaluate what I have understood of them.

Emerson's and Thoreau's view of Tradition and the classics - that great minds of all ages call forth original greatness in us who read their expression, and that therefore we should read the books whose value has transcended time and space, - I believe I am essentially in agreement with them. There have been times when I have admired people who have enjoyed Amiel or

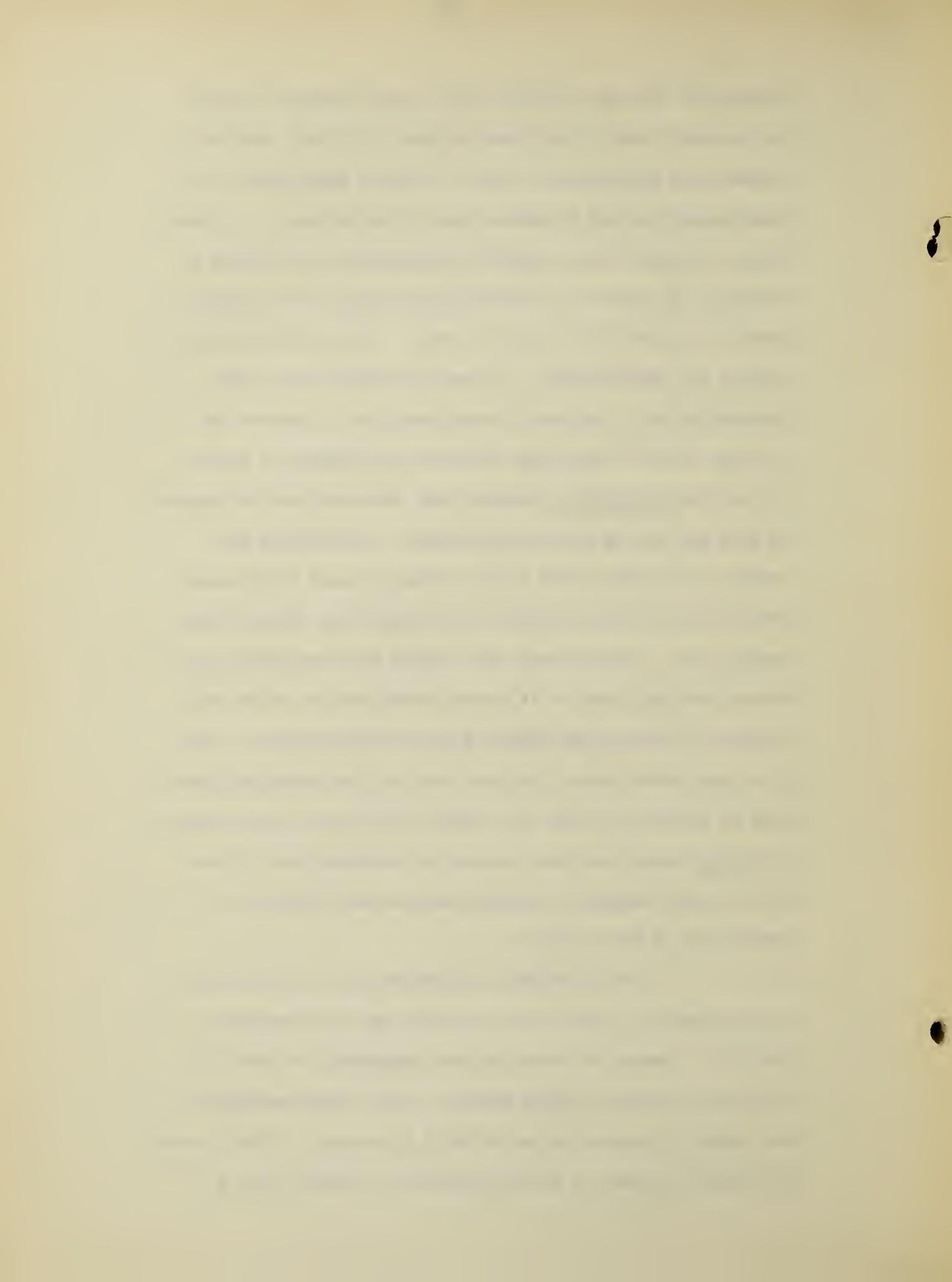
1. Thoreau, Duty of Civil Disobedience from Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers

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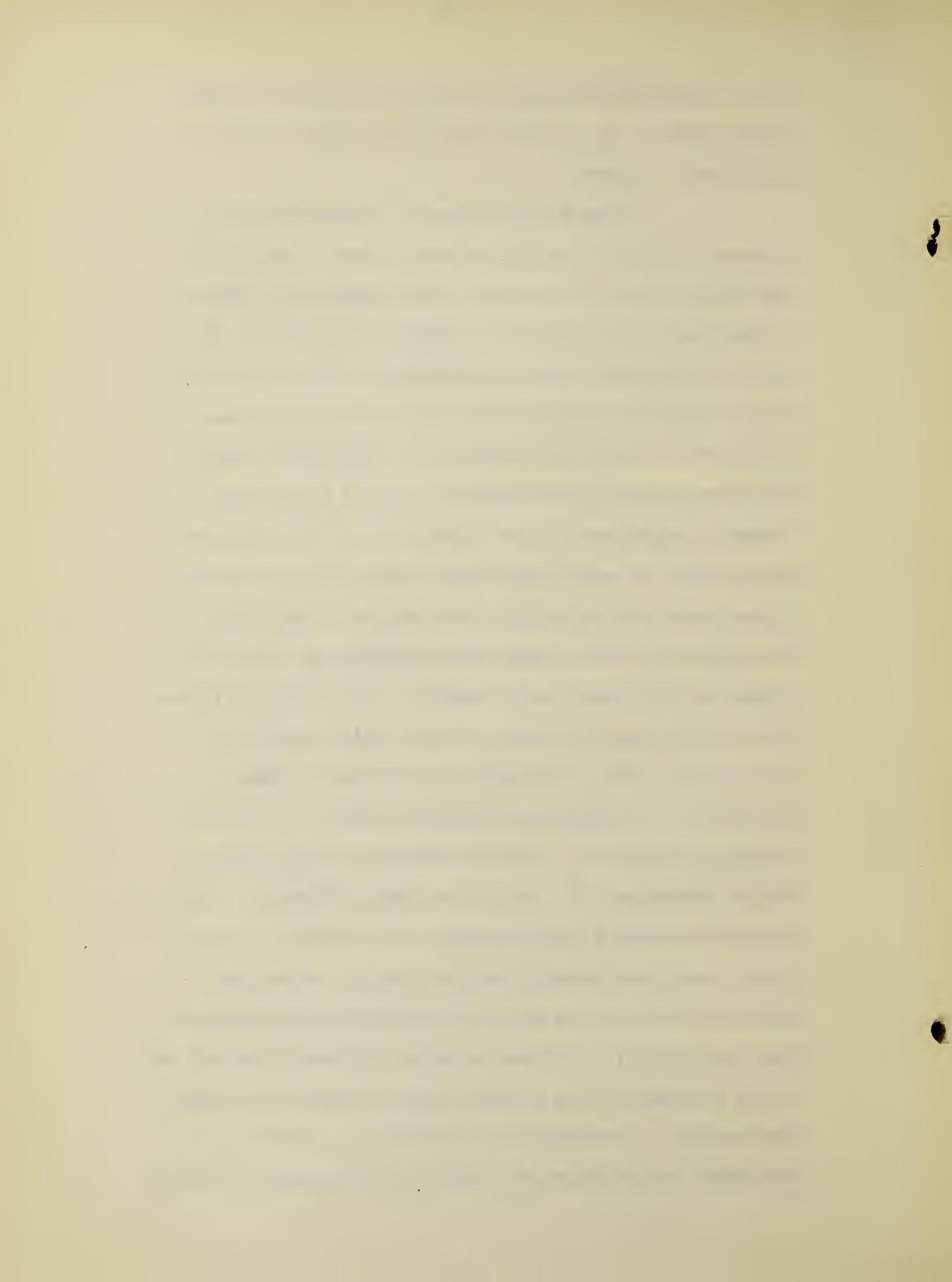
Shakespeare with me, but have also enjoyed newspaper serials and Saturday Evening Post Stories which I couldn't; because it seemed to me they lived in a more inclusive world than I - had wider sympathies and a greater range of affinities. But then again, I thought that I couldn't read always and it seemed a wasting of my force to read widely when I might find universal humanity in some of the books I loved, - the difference was in shading and subordination. It may be argued that a great personality will find truth in any book; but it seems to me that one is apt to miss more adventure in thinking by trying to read his personality, however rich, into any book he happens to pick up, than by spending the time he could afford for reading, with books which in the sifting process of the ages were called classics or were such as some of my friends recommended to me. Having taken this chosen list into account you select your own classics of course; there are apt to be quite a number of them on the World's list, and also there are bound to be some which haven't yet got there and may never get there. It's an individual thing; but books of the ages are more likely to be your books than they are not and probably more of them will be yours taken all together than you could find in a year's list of best sellers.

As for Thoreau's and Emerson's view of Convention or custom, I think it is a healthy one - for maturity: that is - a manner of living may not necessarily be good for you as an individual simply because it has proved expedient or has become a harmless matter of habit in society. What's more, I'd like to add what I think completes the thought: that a



thing is not necessarily weak or vicious because it is conventional either. The name Convention often gets in the way of our impartial judgment.

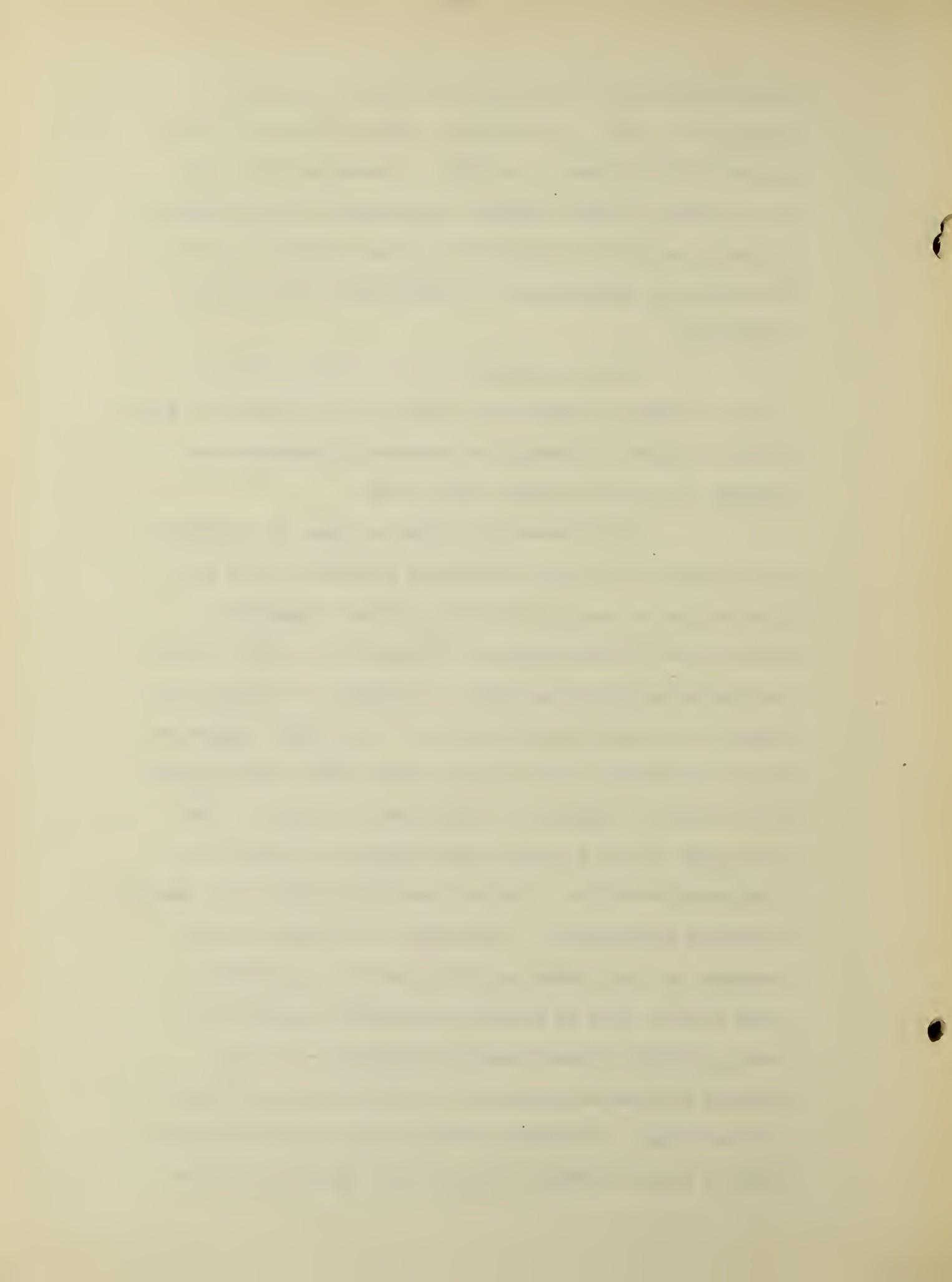
It seems to me, however, that Emerson's is a standard for maturity only. We have to look at conventions and customs from a life in which social pressure has done its no small part in developing our standards of morality. We have to have tested society's conventions by living in them to such an extent that we can imagine them as our conventions before we can truly judge their worth. The highest kind of self-consciousness in which intuition opens a vista of new thought is appreciated in its fullest only by beings who have been educated in social institutions and social relationships: schools where many of the individual desires to action have been refused by social conventional standards and in their very refusal have left room for the growth of fuller individualities. When we have reached a point of balance, poise, maturity, socialization, then it is that we can set about becoming individual. In adolescence begins our first era of critical judgment of standards, - our age of Romanticism when we will have no conventions but those of our Romantic Movement. Later adolescence brings a budding egoist or individualist. If one doesn't stop there, maturity strikes a balance between the worth of society and the worth of the individual which makes a man a personality. But there are some, and Emerson was one, who do not stop here, but go on from a great personality to a great impersonality. There are no short cuts in the growth - one who passes from childhood to maturity without growing to maturity



through adolescence is in danger of seeming an imitator or undeveloped. This is the secret, I think of great men in each age who are still great to us today. Lesser men skip a step in the process, become imitators, and movements repeat themselves. The only true objective interest is reached through a subjective, the only great impersonality or universality through a great personality.

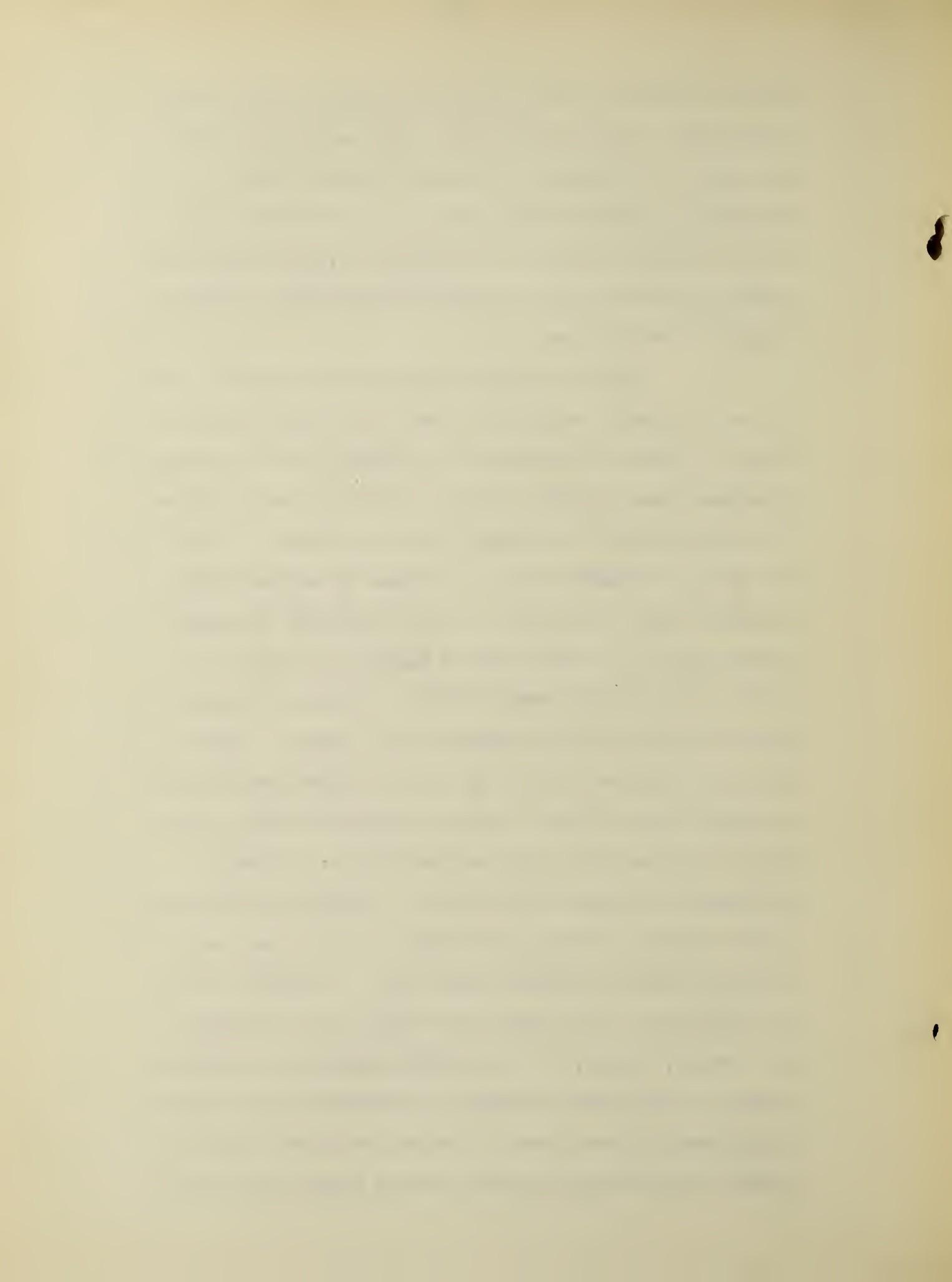
For the youngness in all of us Emerson's and Thoreau's theory of custom and convention has its dangers of serving as an excuse for wasting our resources in ways which the progress of society has shown unsatisfying.

To me Emerson and Thoreau's theory of consistency - that we should live in the revelations of truth revealed to us from the peak of each day's spiritual outlook - regardless of what our acts have been before, believing that in spite of seeming present contradictions truth will always be at harmony with herself - is a good one in so far as it is a protest against the kind of consistency which is only an outer form to guard against one's neighbor's judging one as two-sided or flighty. A man who desires to live sincerely would certainly make that kind of consistency ridiculous. But the consistency within one's own mind is another consideration. One needs to be careful he is not persuaded by a too serene conviction that all contradictory ideas which he feels in successive promptings of genius will, seen en large at a future date look harmonious - to stop thinking too soon and surrender the integrity of his intellect to that conviction. Intuition furnishes material for our thinking. Often it gives us answers to long puzzling questions, but how



shall our mind grow if we don't test the truth of these answers in the light of former experience? There are true paradoxes, but usually the truth lies in a double meaning of terms. Intuitions are often the high peaks in our intellectual life, but if we haven't a good bit of thinking to fill the periods in between, we are in danger of mistaking every passing emotional caprice for an intuition.

Emerson and Thoreau believed that we need to test our social selves in solitude, to come into communion with the source of things and contemplate our characters and our relations in society from the highest point of view when we were in danger of losing our sense of individual force in the crowd. So do I. But let's not forget the return. It seems in this life that the individual finds fuller chance for self development by taking some active part in society than by shunning it and trying to start a new one outside human relations. We have to take the mass into account, at least realize that it exists. Agreed - that in the world as it is now we feel the highest exaltation in solitude or with a friend - rarity of inspiration which we can't find in the crowd; yet I think mob psychology as a stage of development is not necessarily an evil. Through it individuals attain a measure of inspiration, though it be of a lower sort, through leaders, and leaders through them. A good many if not the greater part of our ideals were formed by crowd sentiment. And I wonder, finally, if in an ideally educated and socialized society a crowd might not through its intensification of individuality bring a balance between individual and crowd, a sort of osmosis - and we would thus experience the highest intuitions of

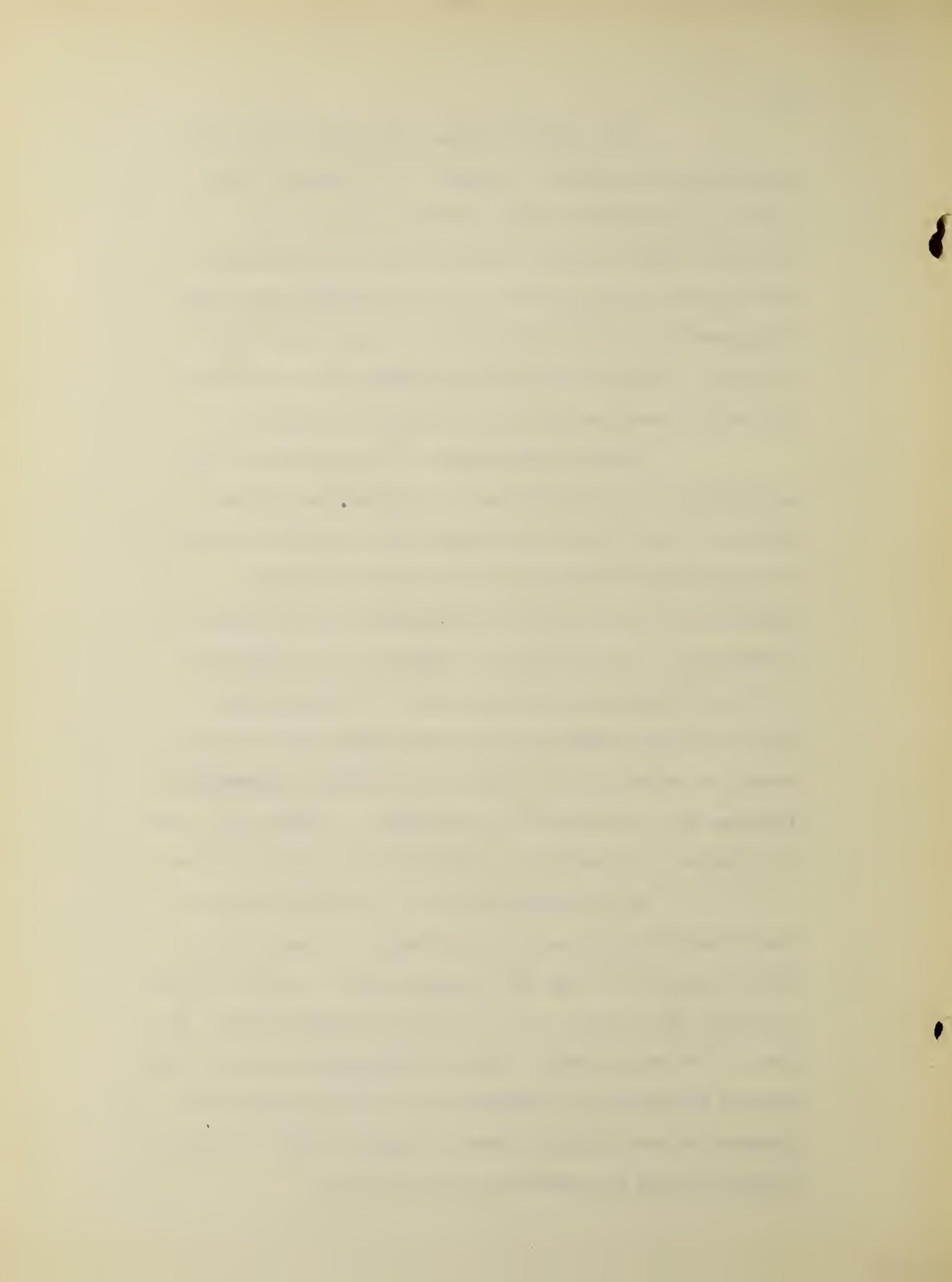


all.

Our social self takes the wisdom of its action from the self we realize in solitude. The speech of such a self is the expression of real sincerity, not the blunt, blurting, usually blundering feeling which some experiences with society irritate us into. So do our solitary selves take their channels of understanding from the social self we find in society. When we realize balance between the two, we have the means of establishing a true simplicity in our lives.

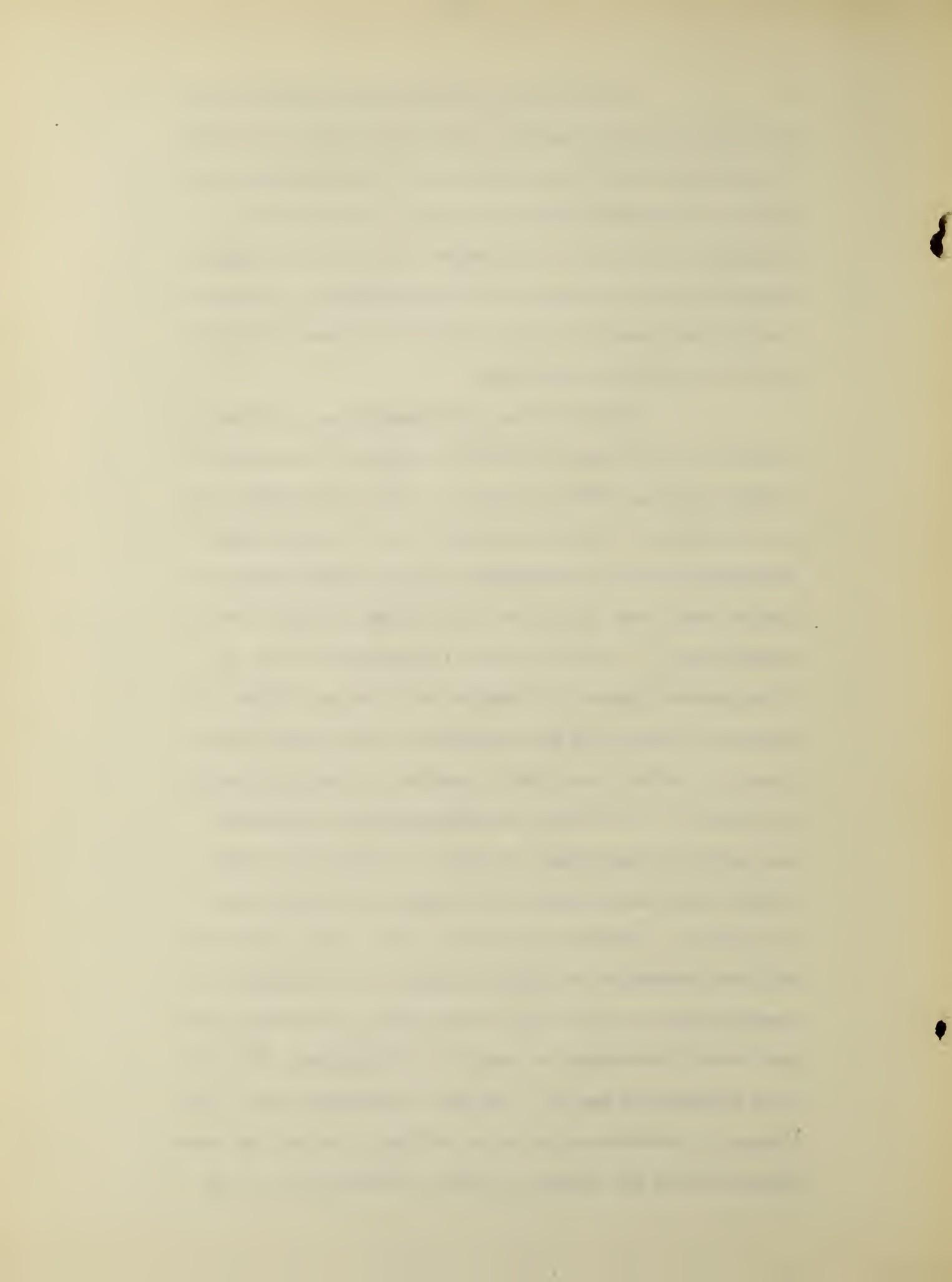
There are times when only the realities of our minds seem to count in solitude, not juggling the practical details of life; and so we are swept back to the periods in our experience when we thought that true living was passive appreciation of beauty and that practicality was the refuge of sottishness. But Lockeanism and Romanticism are half views. It is only when we strengthen ourselves by tilts with the system of things - which are our proving ground and our college - through an understanding of them, that we bring a vigorous love to beauty or a steady wisdom to friendship. We need both, - not all gossamer or all sawdust. Together one vivifies the other.

As for finding solitude, I am not too sure we should find it through escaping into nature. There are the means to solitude in work which belongs to you. Work is a part of natural law as surely as is a path by the Concord River. The eyes of a worker are steady when he looks up at you from his job. There is sanity there - mingled coolness of self ownership and humanness of ready sympathy; reserve strength, power of purpose, a desire "to see life steadily and see it whole".



It seems to me that Emerson and Thoreau do not sufficiently take the social group point of view into account in their belief that the perfect state of no government at all was to be attained through the gradual perfecting of the individual citizen by his own effort - and that the present state should not interfere with his developments, that men are instinctively good, and that laws are to be broken when they offend the individual conscience.

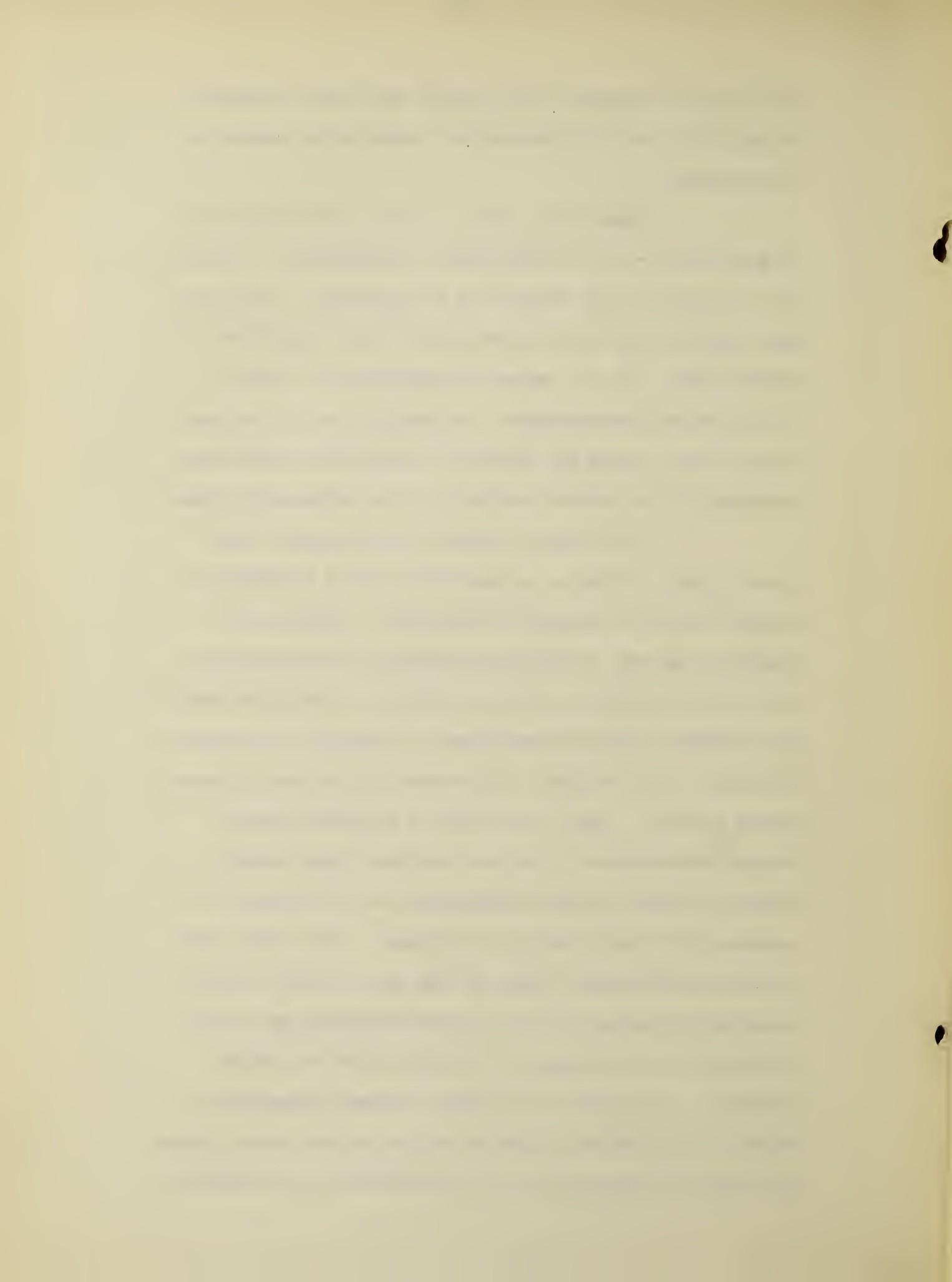
Even if all men were innately good, standards of morality differ widely in different sections of the country, different races, strata of society, between the educated and the uneducated. It seems necessary to set up some general standards which shall be country wide, lest though people be good at heart they cut one another's throats through lack of understanding. I think we must also recognize, as by my interpretation Emerson and Thoreau refuse to, that there are people who, because of some perversion in their social development or through some mental incapacity are actually harmful to society. If the state has not some system by which she may direct the development of these or interfere with their freedom, what will happen to the freedom of the socialized individual? We have to recognize, I think, that another man may have temptations to express himself in a way harmful to society which we do not feel or comprehend, - and that he may need social conventions or laws in his development, which we have outgrown the need of. We have to sacrifice some of our freedom of self-expression to the end that a society may exist where there is any freedom of higher self-expression, as we



sublimate our instincts, often denying them direct expression on one plane, that our character as a whole may be acceptable to our ideals.

Human nature grows by pruning and re-direction to higher ends - not in unrestricted self-expression. Society is a problem of living together on a large scale. We give up some individual desires that we may find truth together on a higher plane. It is a matter of subordination - finding essentials and non-essentials. In the long run, for a large group of men, a state may effect this subordination with more knowledge of the problems involved than the individual citizen.

It is harder to reckon from the social standpoint, always. There is an element of fiction in imagining yourself acting for masses of individuals. Masses get at reality in one way, through the interplay of the philosopher, the artist in literature, drama, painting, or music, the doctor, the statesman, and the laboring man; and each one of these gets at reality in his own way. All arrive at truth from different points of view. Again - there must be a balance between society and solitude. That the individual grows through society is certain, whatever expectation or need sends him off momentarily to take soundings in solitude. How society grows through the individual, though we feel that it does, is more uncertain of tracing; there is so much mob-mindedness in the acceptance of a new program, - but that is not our problem primarily. In the end the one who feels most strongly the worth of the individual character will be the most social person; but there are growings for his own soul which he can accomplish



only by mass action.

If a law requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, I agree with Thoreau that one ought to break the law; I agree with Emerson we should oftentimes make provisional law where law is not yet ready, but I think we ought to examine our definition of the word injustice with a view to all social as well as individual consequences, first. Conceivably there are situations in which a man might agree with you that you should do him a slight injustice, if by that action you might prevent the doing of a larger injustice to a greater number of people. Perhaps if we considered this, wars might not start so trivially.

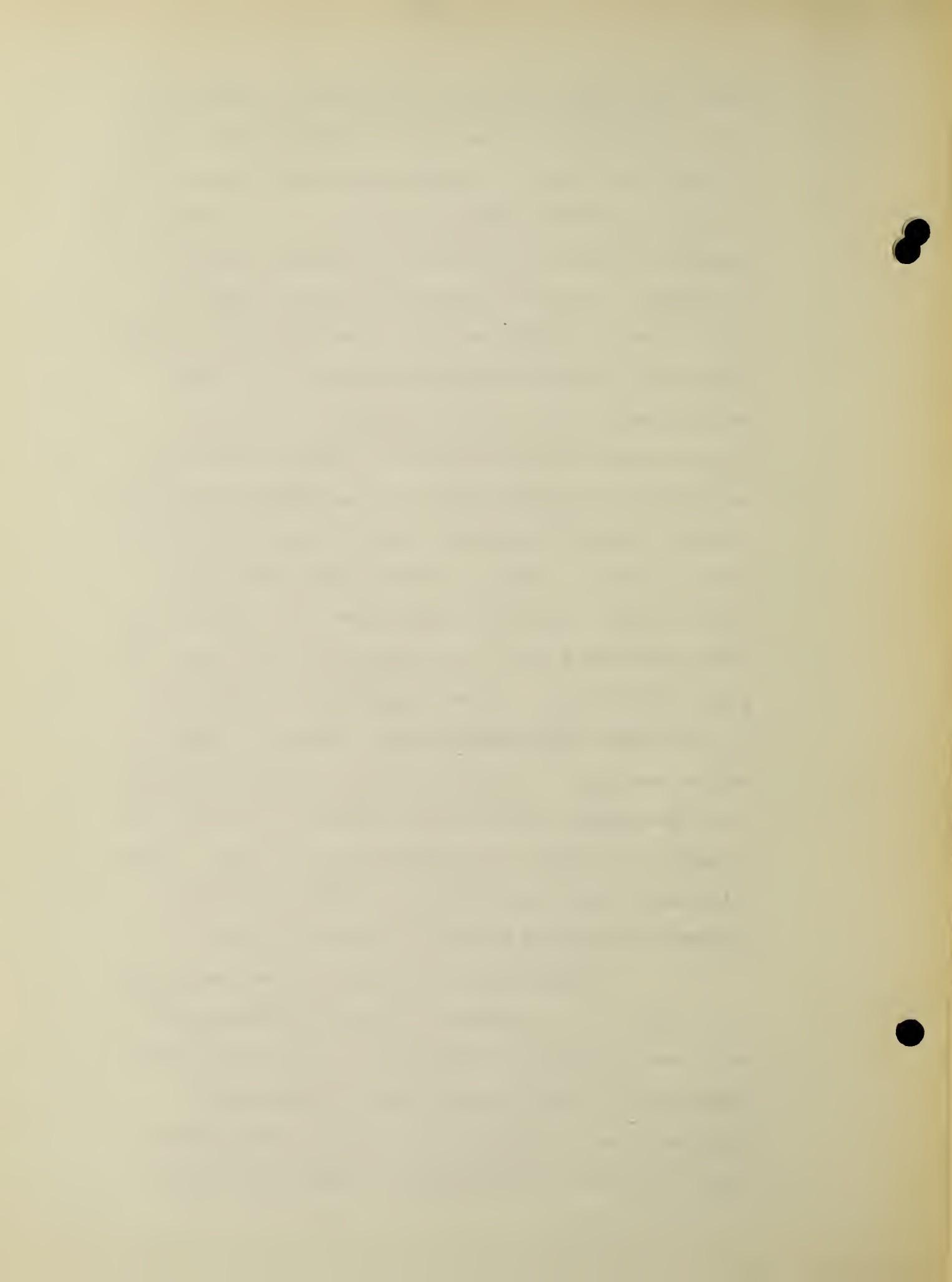
After all aren't a government, a state, politics, business, practical affairs of any sort really an outgrowth of a desire in humanity to dispatch with external needs in the most efficient way possible, so that there will be more time left for each individual to explore his inner life in its social and universal relations, and to live according to the insight which he receives from the experiences (and thinking about them) in society and solitude: the freedom of each man sacrificing a part to the freedom of all? We are often confusing ends with means.

As for social reform - Thoreau and Emerson, I think, believed it should come about through educational institutions, and through the individual's attending to those poor for whom his individuality could do more than minister to bodily needs alone; Love, not the so-called philanthropy was the saving force. That might be ideal if educational institutions



weren't such gradual processes, if there were any high-sign by which a man might always know "his poor" when he came in contact with them, and if there were enough people with a wise love to go around - one to each small group of poor. In the long run, education, I agree, is the best means of getting at the root of the problem, - education through church, theatre, forum, and school. But in the meantime there are mal-adjustments in human lives which are unbearable and which education won't touch. Extreme poverty in lack of physical necessities, starvation poverty of spirit through emotions which have assumed control over wills - all stages of mental disease, feeble-mindedness, and insanity. There is need of some organization in the Love that would touch these. There is more than liquor-drunkenness: there are people drunk with gregariousness, with solitude; with food or with pure thinking - you can't get at any of these with a law of prohibition. We need organizations of trained (that is, socialized), widely-educated social workers and trained doctors in medicine and mental hygiene who have some understanding of the relations between our emotions and our wills and can so direct the resources of our emotions to social ends. There will still be enough room left in the world of poor for our deciding our own wisest expression of Love to our poor.

We need schools and forums - and we need churches too, I think - not as monuments to systems of theology whose words have lost their old connotations. It is for each clear-minded prophet to take the words which are of most vital significance to his own age and hew with them commandments in stone. Until our religious education becomes more inventive,



less passively interpretive with worn-out words, and so keeps pace with our legislation, the latter is futile. Emerson didn't need a church after he had reached manhood, Thoreau didn't; but the mass of people need some public expression of ideals not as ethics alone, but as inspiration,- for reassurance. Many are the degrees of completeness we assume and try to give others the impression of. Strangely enough out of our own pretending grows real completeness. It is a sort of perpetual joke on ourselves. Things like that happen in mob inspiration too. Let's recognize mob psychology and use it for social and therefore for individual ends, not deplore and ignore it. Out of our admiration for personalities grows our appreciation of the virtues they possess. Out of our subjective enthusiasm for a man of one profession, we get an objective interest in the service he can do in that profession which carries us through many hard years of training for it. Things grow that way.

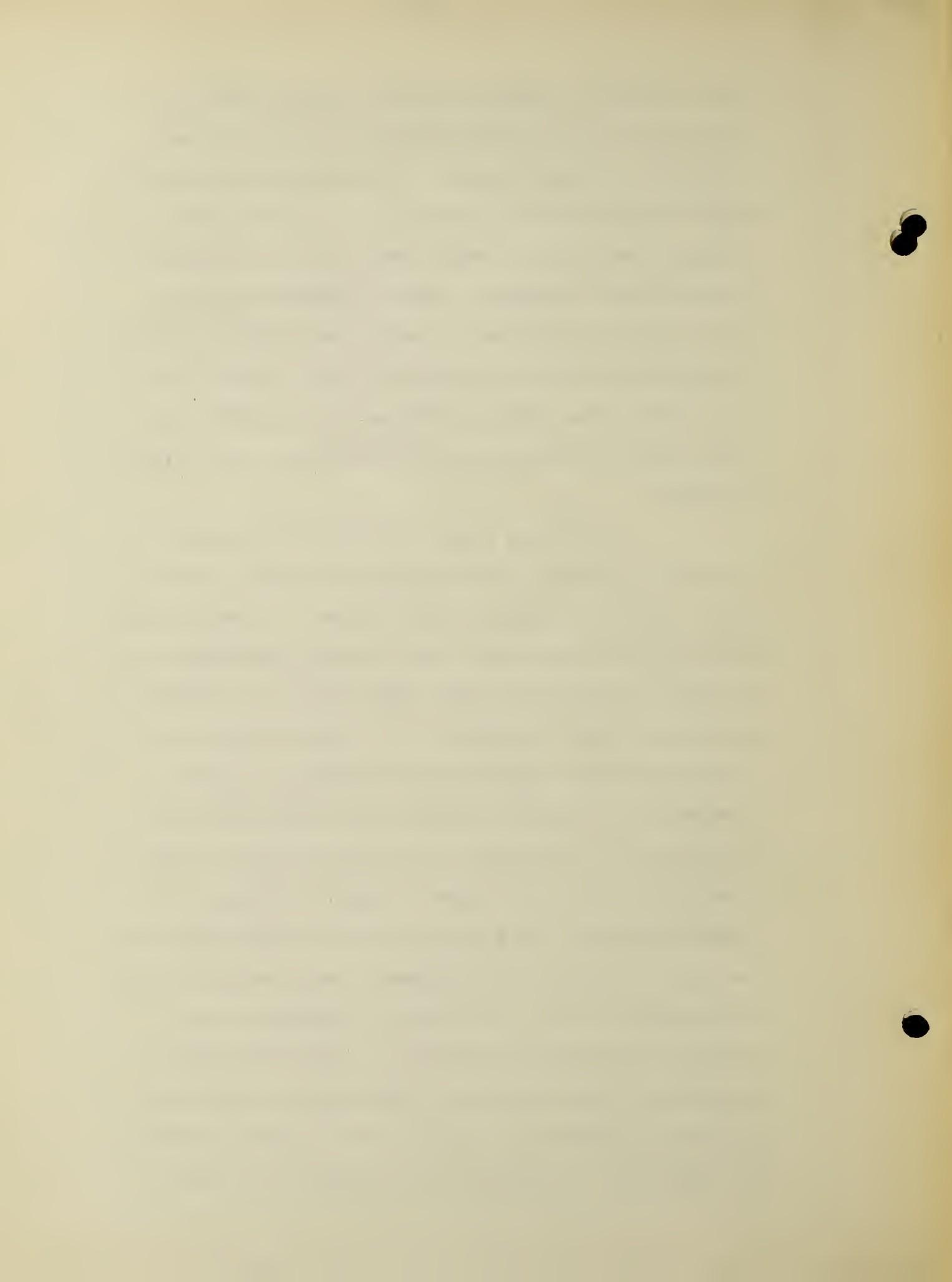
As for Emerson's and Thoreau's view of economic reform - again I think they look at it from an individual standpoint of moral economy and earning, neglecting to treat it practically from a mass point of view. Under their advocated system of a completely laissez-faire system, there would be no chance for the individual development in command of wealth which they have so well laid down the principle of.

The natural meter of supply and demand never was self-adjusting - else wherefore the greater part of economic theory? In a laissez-faire nation we would have false laws of demand and supply which without any state supervision, would



tend to justify any individual means - after the fashion of ordinary greediness or a Machiavellian despot - by ends for individual or corporation gain. On the other hand, there are evils in competition, but less evils in a, to some extent, supervised competition of actual worth, than in a rigidly controlled system of Communism. Neither Communism or laissez-faire would allow individuals to develop their system of income and expenditure as Emerson and Thoreau wished - that we should earn by making some hearty contribution of our talents to the general welfare of society, and spend after our several natures - for power.

To sum up, I agree with Emerson's and Thoreau's evaluation of Tradition and the Classics as agents by which we come to realize our latent individual powers. I agree too with their attitude as mature men, toward convention and custom that the worth of these lies largely in their value to the individual character in specific instances, but I do not think that this attitude should be adopted by men not thoroughly socialized. I believe with the two philosophers that we should not worship consistency for its own sake, but I believe we cannot entirely disregard the word in our process of mental development. I agree essentially, I think, with these men in their estimate of the worth of solitude and the necessary balance between society and solitude; but I go a step further in recognizing and in wishing to make use of mob-psychology, a thing which they for the most part ignore and in the times in which it creeps into their writing regard it as a thing to be as speedily as possible done away with. In general I do not disagree with Emerson's



and Thoreau's attitude toward the laws of a state, that we should break the law which makes us the agent of injustice to another, but urge that their conception of "injustice" be interpreted to include an examination of social as well as individual consequences. In the matter of Social Reform I think Emerson and Thoreau do not take into account the vastness and nature of the need for reform which cannot be adequately effected by individuals of the slow-moving process of education. In applying individual standards of income and expenditures to society as a whole I believe Emerson and Thoreau do not sufficiently consider social consequences. Their advocated system of laissez-faire would not allow the development of individualism for which they plead.

Taken all in all Thoreau's and Emerson's theories of individualism as I have given them are worth much to us in our growth as individuals in society, but we shall have need to study other men to develop sound theories of our relation as a part of society to the individual.



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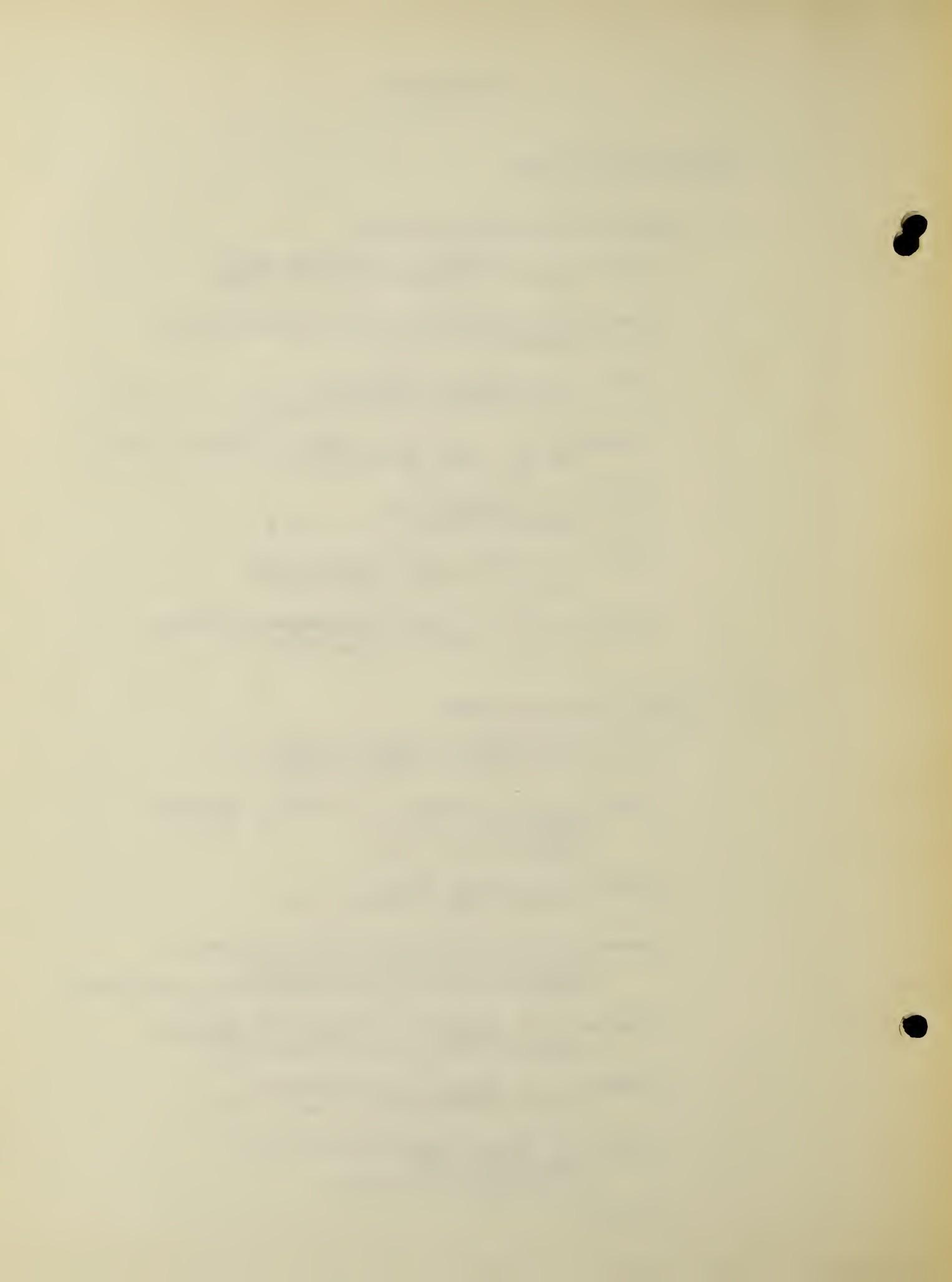
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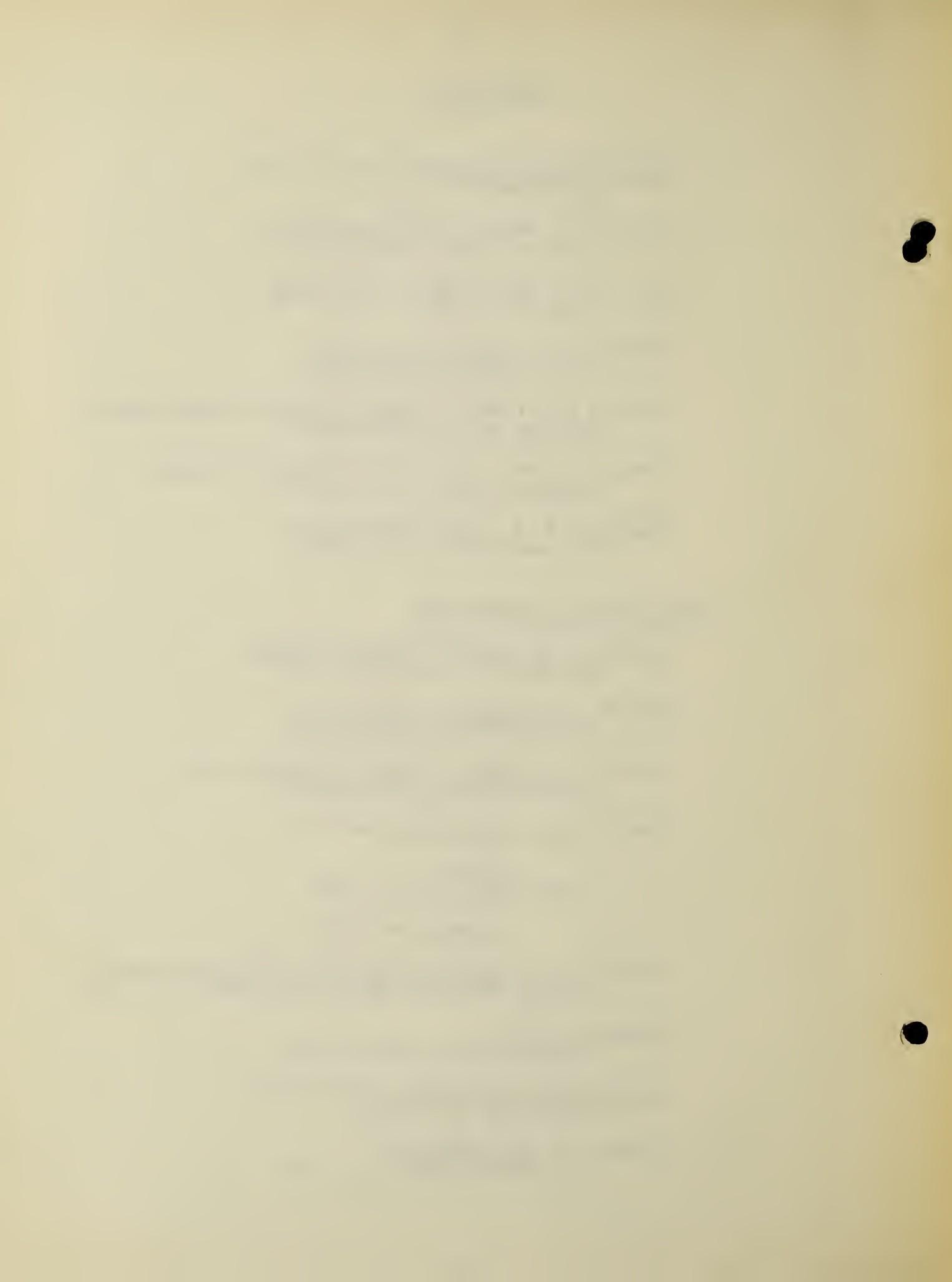
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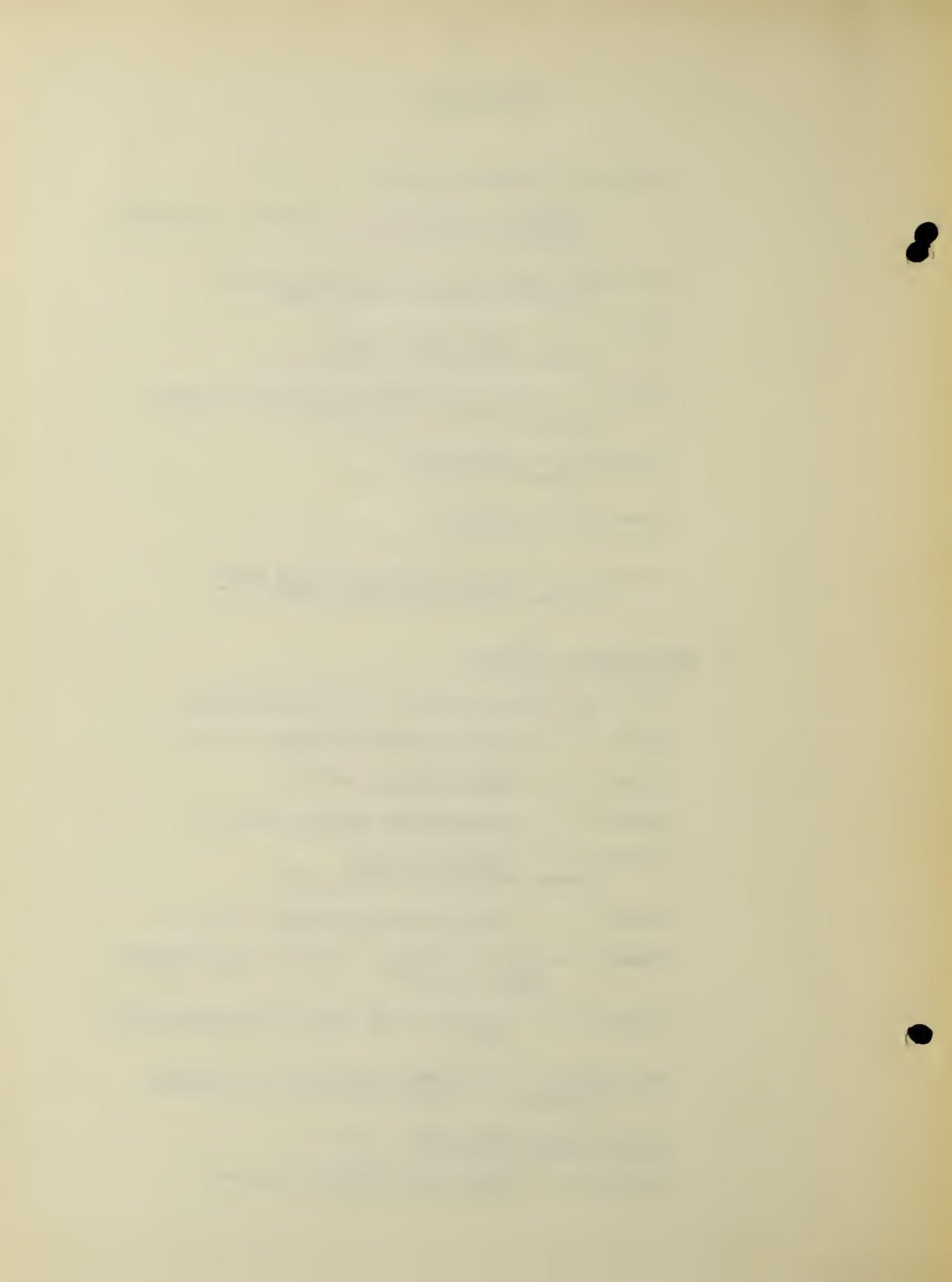
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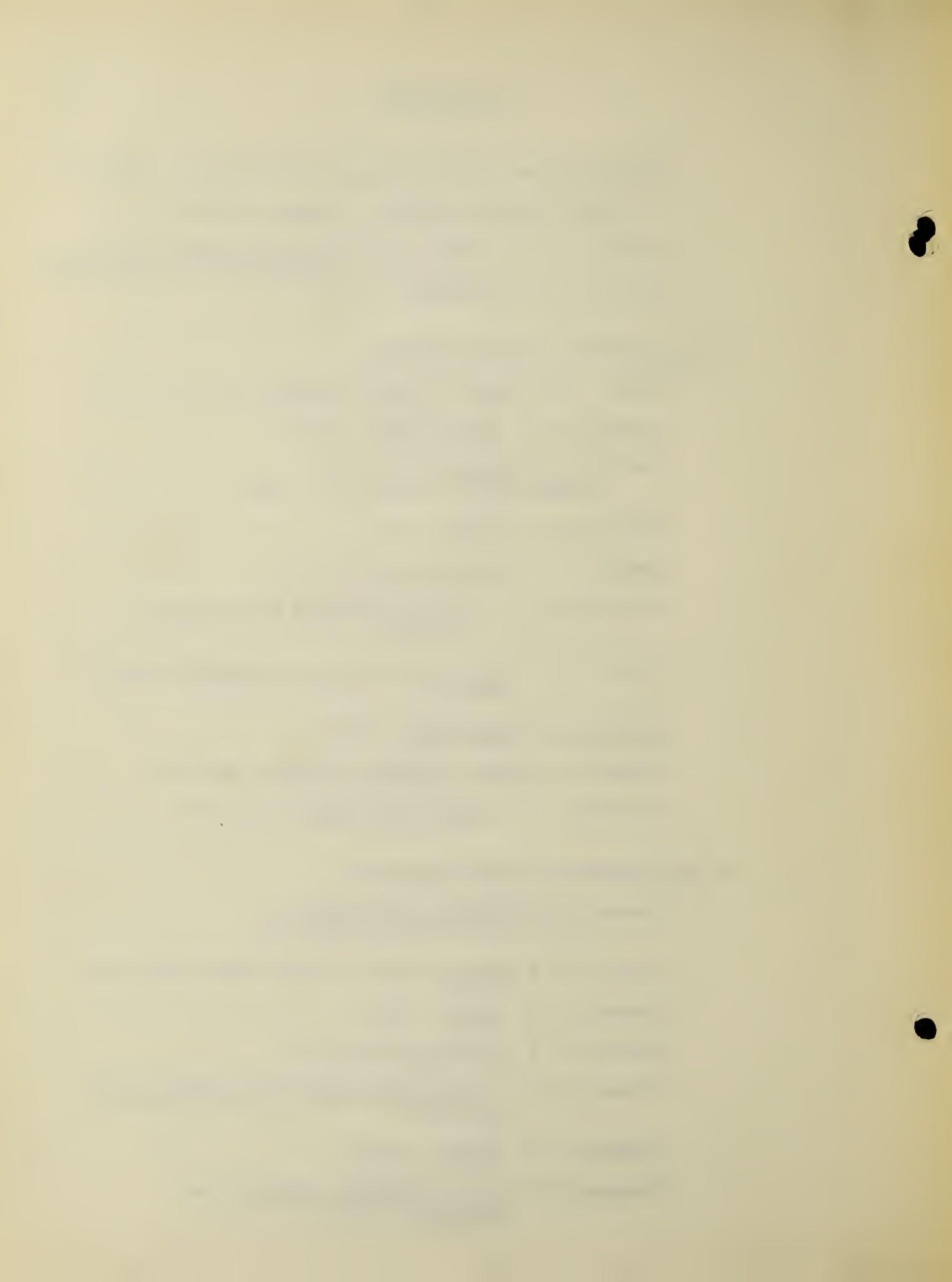
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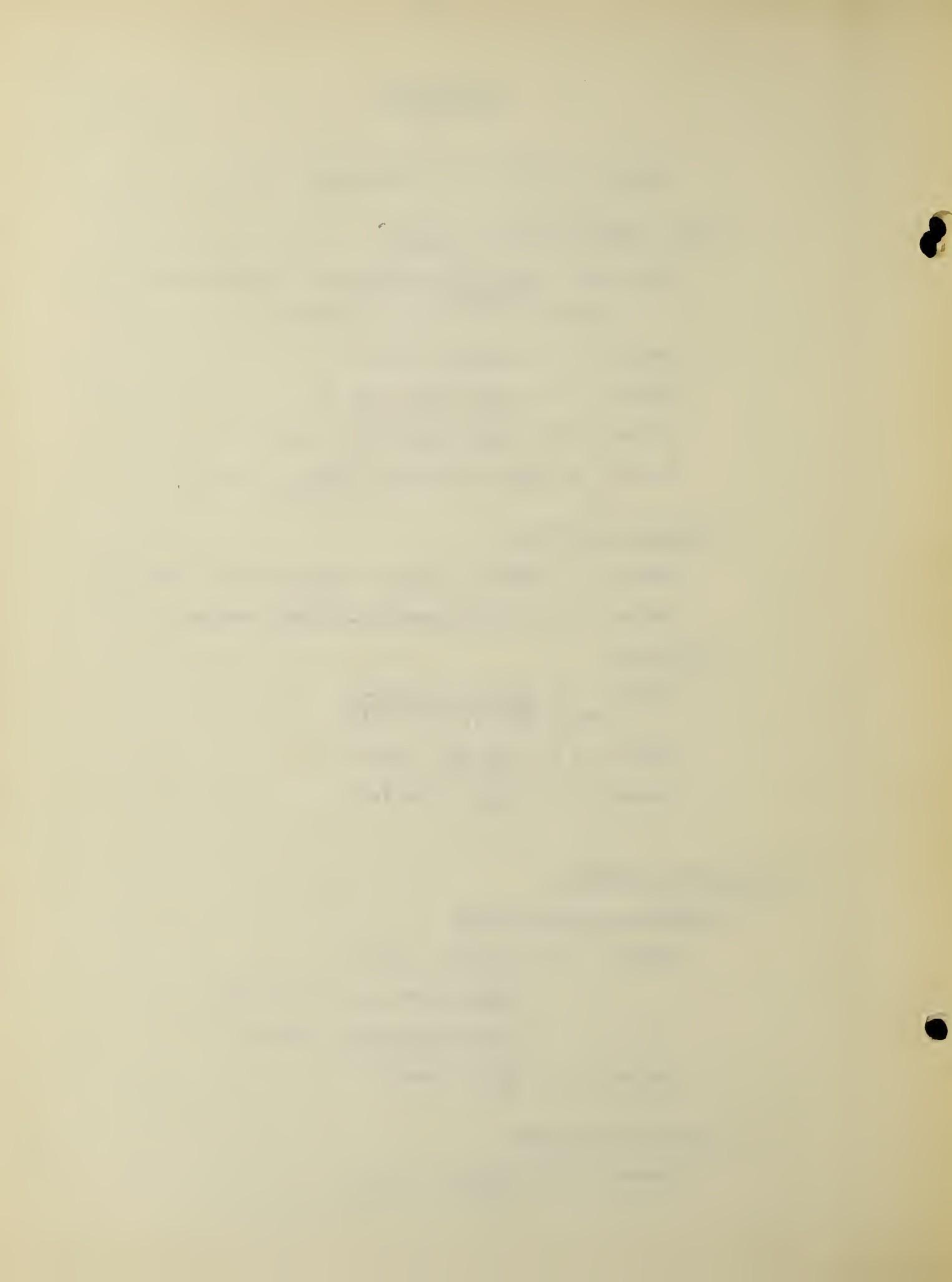
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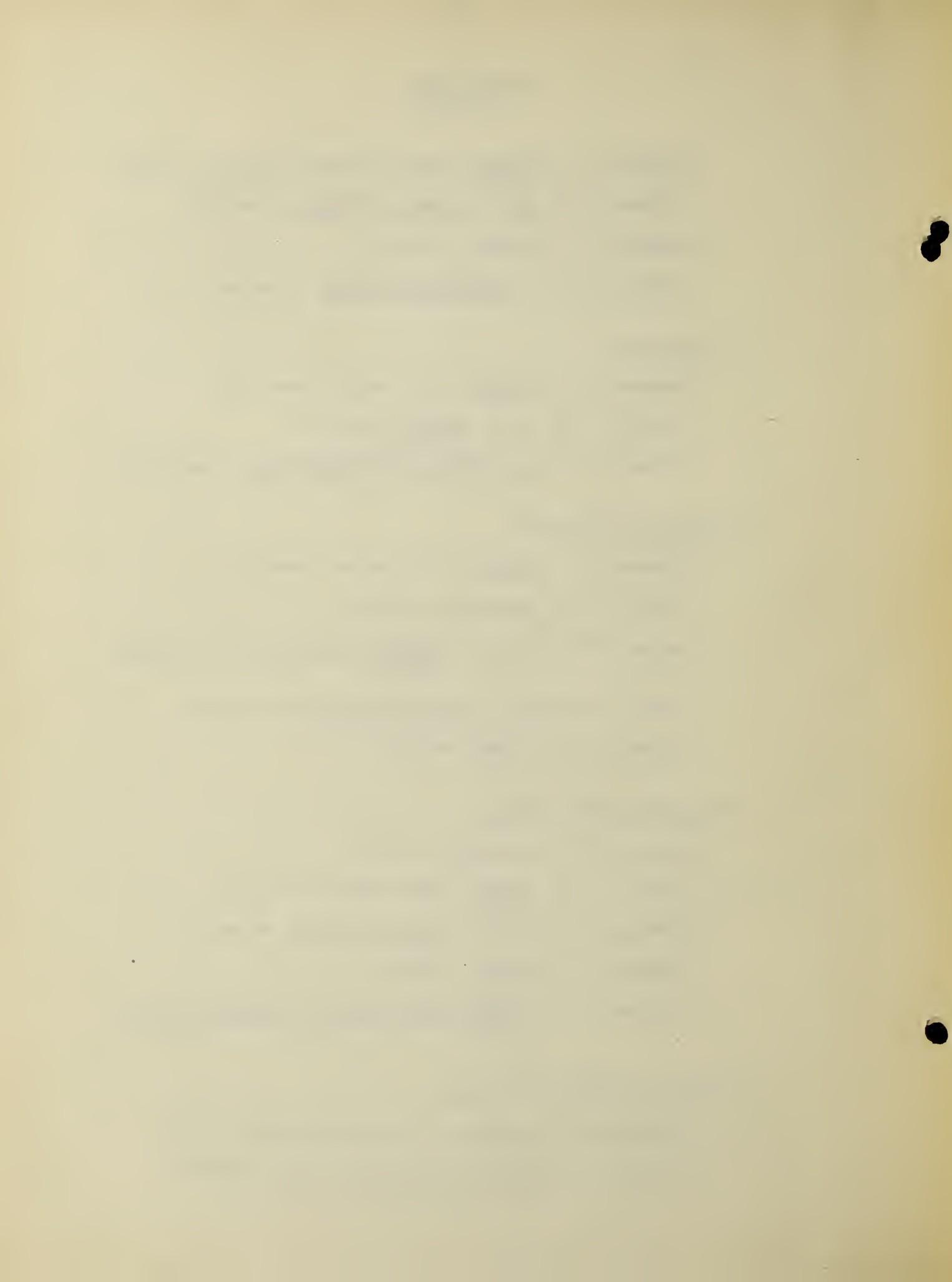
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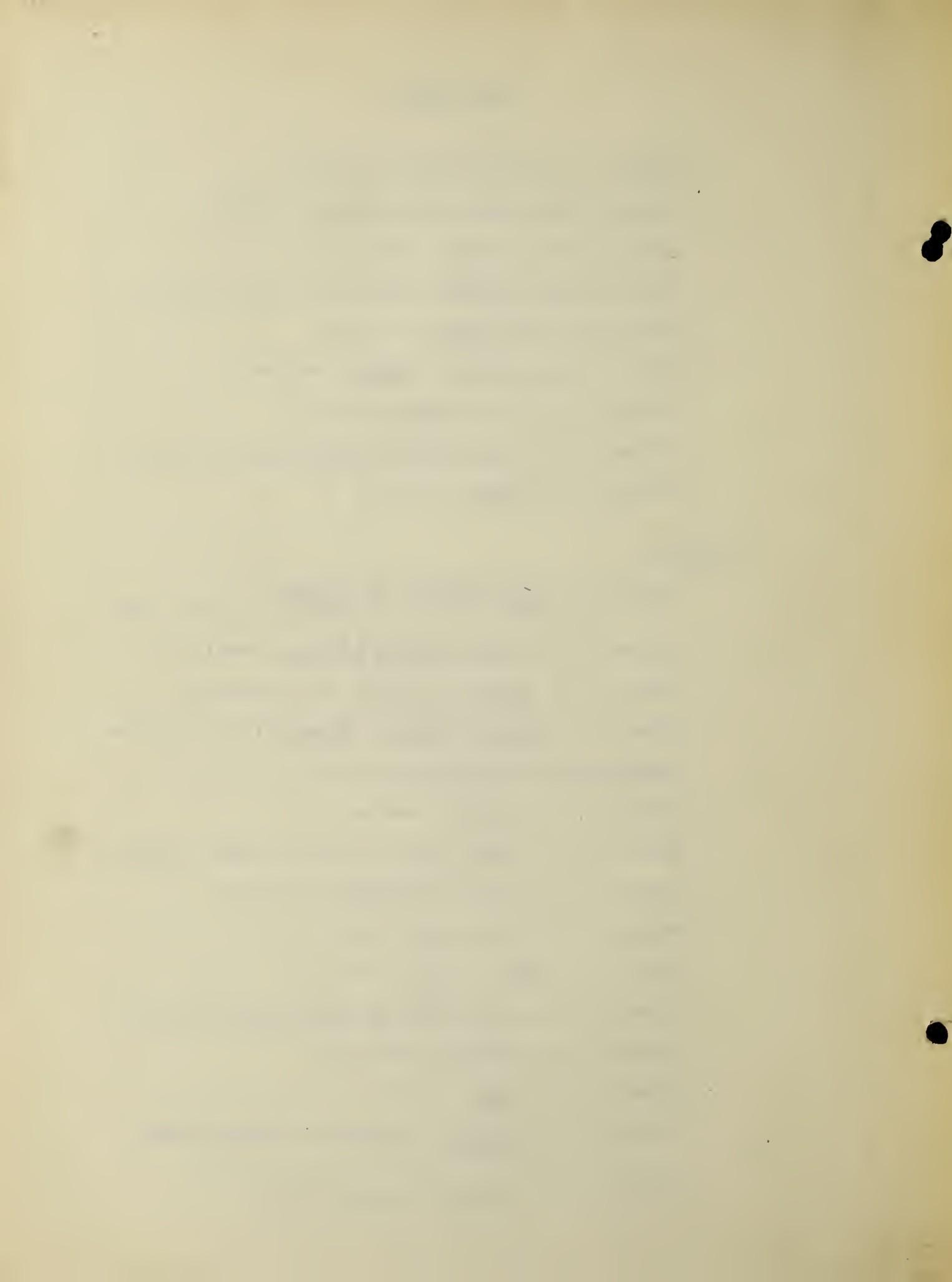


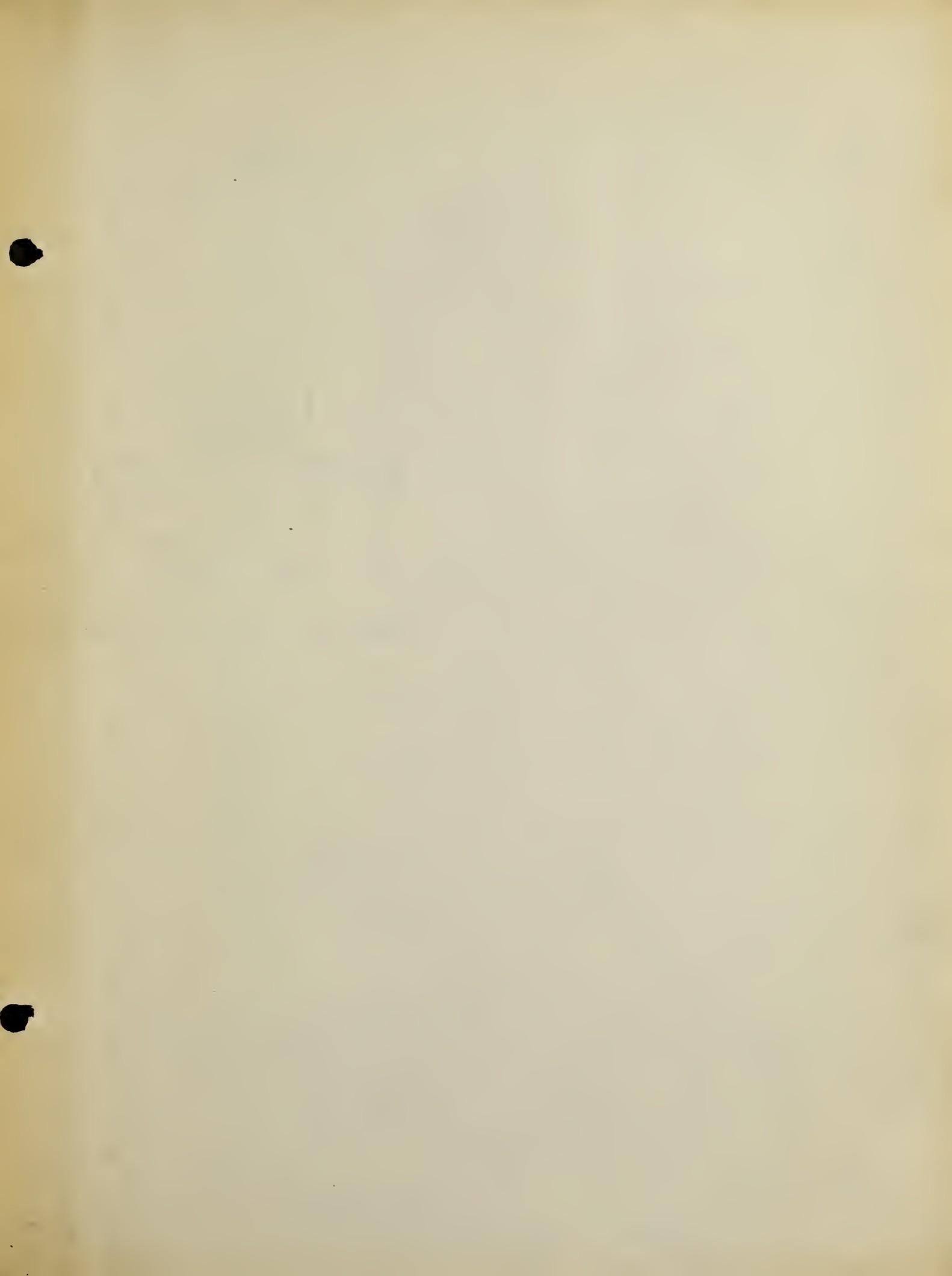
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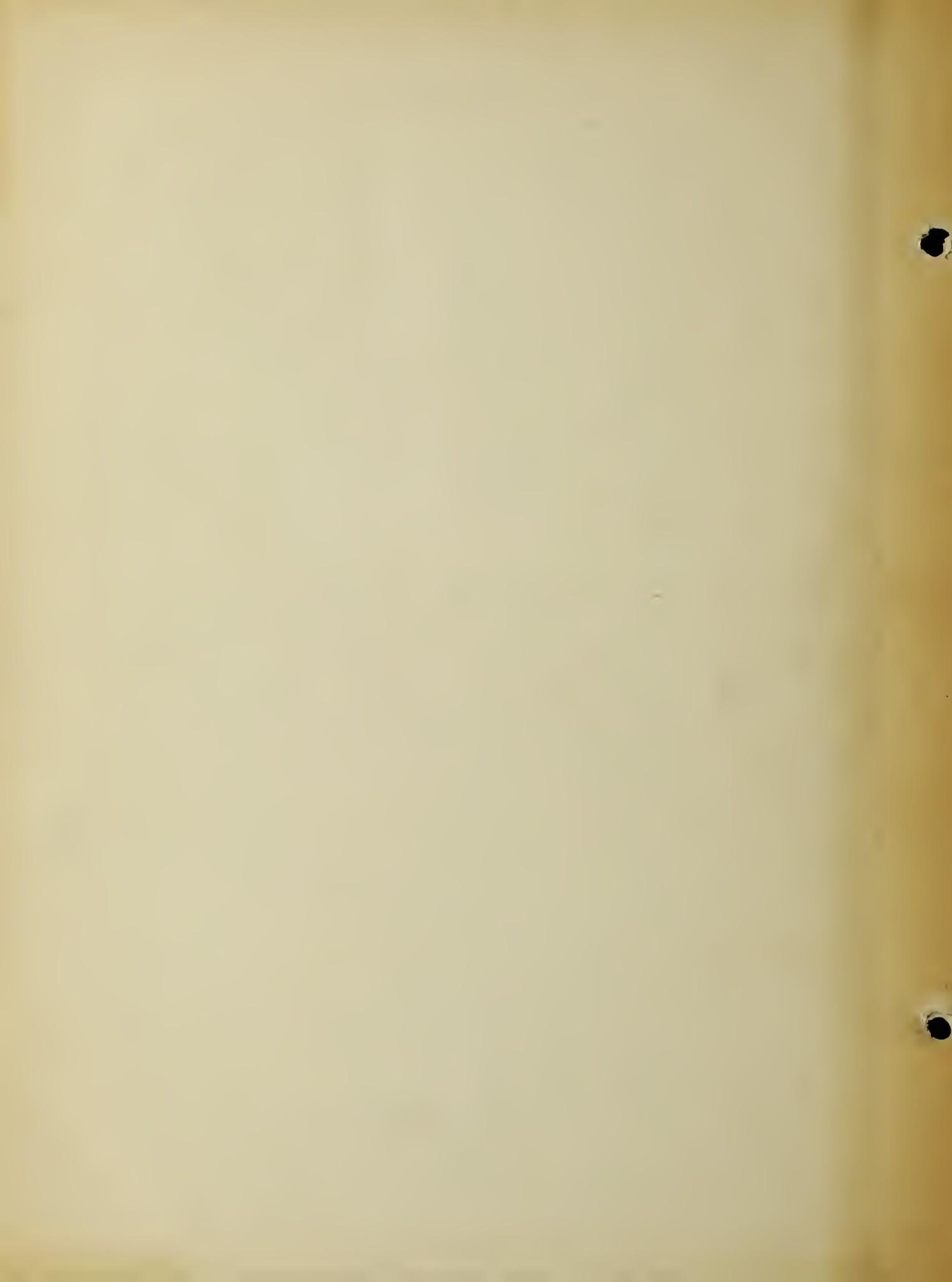
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